

As several editors on the staff of Olympia Press had long been suspicious of the relationship between Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson, they felt it their duty to launch an investigation. A thorough search of the basements and attic at 221B Baker Street, London, England, finally resulted in the recovery of a secret cache. Dr. Watson, always a man somewhat ahead of his time—despite his being so frequently overshadowed by his friend—had followed the course of so many businessmen in these days of exorbitant taxes. He had kept two sets of books.

We present here a few of the most extraordinary instances, where the contents of these secret files are at greatest variance with his previously published journals. We hope their open publication will finally cast a little greater light into the peculiar lives of these singular heroes.

For the reader whose conceptions of the Holmes-Watson mystique stem largely from the Rathbone-Bruce portrayals in their famous series of motion pictures, these revealing glimpses into Dr. Watson's private records may prove shocking . . . possibly even disturbing. To these we apologize, but we are certain the purists and the many Holmes cultists will appreciate the effectiveness of our researches. We expect they will laud the courage of the publisher in producing such an obviously controversial set of accounts.

THE SEXUAL ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

J. Watson

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Introduction

In the year 1878 I took my degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of London, and subsequently the course for army surgeons at Netley. Attached to the Fift Northumberland Fusiliers, I was sent to the front in Anghanistan, where I was wounded soon after my arrival I then spent a memorable several weeks in the hospital Peshawur, under the care of some exceptionally attraction orderlies, before being returned to England. Still in poor state of health, I was discharged from the army a small, monthly stipend. Though a young man of lethan twenty-five, I now found myself in the singular situation of being a retired gentleman, trying to live on tiny government pension at a time when prices were soating and decent accommodations were not to be had at price within my means.

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Consequently, I had taken up residence in a small hotel-not the sort of lodgings to be recommended for any person of taste-and began spending a fair amount of time in the local taverns. Of these, I especially enjoyed the Criterion, because of the many handsome men who went there. While sitting at the bar one afternoon, I had the good fortune to run into a young fellow named Stamford, who had been a dresser under me at the front. We had engaged in a brief affair, and I remembered him particularly for his truly extraordinary rectal structurehis ability to relax and contract the sphincter muscles as if they were under a totally voluntary control. Quite apart from these unique talents, I was naturally delighted to encounter any former comrade-in-arms in London. I immediately removed to a table and asked Stamford to join me.

"My dear fellow," he said, after we had been drinking for several minutes, "I do not wish to pry, but although I am delighted to see you again, I am distressed to note a certain . . . er . . . lack of prosperity in your appearance, sir."

"Ah, Stamford," I sighed, "your eye is keen as ever. Yes," I admitted, "I am rather up-against-it." I went on to explain my present circumstances, and being somewhat in my cups I omitted nothing of the dilemma which faced me.

"Poor devil!" exclaimed Stamford. He hesitated then, watching me closely before going on. "I greatly fear I may be misunderstood if I suggest what comes most readily to mind," he continued at length, "but while the initial suggestion may shock you, I think sober consideration may produce quite the opposite reaction. . . ."

He eyed me quizzically, and I shrugged, wondering what exactly he had in mind. I had already noticed the expensive, overly stylish cut of his suit, and also the clever bit of tailoring about his crotch. Well, I thought, Stamford was certainly never lacking in that respect, either. The memory was a pleasant one . . . large, deep-

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I sighed at length, smiled despite my apprehension and this reminder of my distressing circumstances. "I am desperate enough to try almost anything," I admitted, "but my health precludes maintaining even a minimal

practice."

Still speaking under obvious strain, and in an almost apologetic tone, Stamford admitted what I was already beginning to suspect, that he was actively procuring young men for various and sundry activities, supplying these to persons of means who could pay for whatever their particular tastes required. "But you must understand, Watson," he continued, "I am not a protector of male harlots, nor what is called a 'pimp' in the common vernacular. I am, rather, a broker. I charge a modest fee for bringing together two gentlemen of similar persuasions. If the one who is better able pays the fee, this is something I do not question. Nor can I control what may subsequently pass between the two persons once I have introduced them. . . ."

"Your are not suggesting . . . ?" I began in horror. "Now, now . . . wait a moment, my dear friend," he urged. He seized my elbow in a firm but gentle grasp to prevent my standing. "Really, Watson, I recall you were not above an occasional dalliance, and unless your wound is excessively disfiguring I see no reason why this body of yours—this body which has already caused you such distress despite your youth— should not be put to use to remedy the deprived situation in which you presently find yourself."

"I find the idea outrageous!" I replied indignantly. But despite my offended tone the prospect was remarkably intriguing. Nor was my shifting attitude completely hidden from young Stamford. After all, it was his business to detect the subtle nuances on another's features, and to

interpret these for his own advantage. A faint smile crossed his lips, and he gestured for the waiter to bring us another round of drinks.

"I think you will find the gentleman I have in mind very much to your liking," he continued, as if I had already agreed to join his stable. "The fellow is a chemist, of sorts, but actually quite a brilliant student in several varied and diverse areas of scientific endeavor. In short, he is a man of your own class, who is simply in more fortunate circumstances."

As Stamford rattled on, I found myself increasingly attracted by his proposition. Habit and decency fought a fierce though losing battle within my conscience. In the end, I agreed to meet the man he had in mind—and without saying so to Stamford, I had more or less decided to follow through with the rest of his suggestions. Thus it happened I was introduced to Mr. Sherlock Holmes that very afternoon.

Stamford sent a boy to inquire when we might come by, and the lad returned a short while later. "Mr. Holmes says you should come straight round," he told us with a knowing grin. "He seemed quite anxious to make the gentleman's acquaintance," he added, brazenly winking at me.

"There, Watson!" said Stamford with a chuckle, "your problems are over,—at least for the present."

"I hope they're not just beginning," said I.

Holmes received us in his laboratory at the hospital, where he was conducting a series of peculiar experiments. Quite an energetic person, he bounced forward to greet us, extending a large, angular hand, much stained by his careless handling of chemical solutions. "This is indeed a pleasure!" he said brightly. His sharp, gray eyes quickly traveled the length of my body, resting momentarily at my crotch as a smile spread openly across his narrow, aquiline features. A man about my own age, Holmes was quite handsome and appealing despite his high-bridged nose and excessively slender physique. Somewhat taller

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the hospital, experiments. ward to greet tained by his his is indeed y eyes quickly omentarily at his narrow, Holmes was high-bridged membal taller

than I, he was a man of obvious strength and willfulness. "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive," he added after a momentary silence, and before I could question this extraordinary statement, he had launched into an enthusiastic description of the experiment in which he was presently engaged.

"I've found it!" he told us excitedly. "I have discovered a reagent which is precipitated by haemoglobin and

nothing else!"

"That is interesting, chemically, no doubt," I answered, "but practically . . ."

"Why, man, it is the most practical medico-legal discovery for years! Don't you see that it gives us an infallible test for blood stains? Come over here!" He seized me by the coat sleeve in his eagerness and drew me to the table at which he had been working. "Nice," he muttered absently, as his hand slipped from my arm and grazed lightly across my hip and backside. Then he launched into a description of his experiments and their result, drawing a drop of blood from his own finger to illustrate the point. "Ha! ha!" he cried as the solution underwent an obvious reaction. "What do you think of that?"

"It seems a very delicate test," I remarked. By now I was more than minimally attracted to him, wishing he would forego his scientific endeavors and get more to the point of my visit. The hour was growing late, and I think we were probably the only people left in the laboratory portion of the building.

"Yes, yes! I see you are impatient," he remarked distractedly. "I shall not burden you with a further discourse on my discoveries. Stamford, I thank you," he said turning to our companion. "If it is agreeable with John, here," he added smiling at me, "I think we might hit it off just famously!"

There was a brief conversation between Stamford and Holmes, this carried on just outside the range of my hearing. Afterward, my new-found friend invited me to

accompany him to his lodgings. "I have just moved into a marvellous suite of rooms on Baker Street," he remarked, "and I am most anxious to christen them." He laughed merrily, clapping me lightly on the back and allowing his arm to remain across my shoulders as he guided me toward the outer door. Stamford followed at some distance, and once outside he slipped discreetly out of sight. Holmes hailed a passing hansom, and we were soon on our way to his flat.

This was all such a new experience for me, and everything had happened in such rapid sequence, I hardly knew what to say or do. Being somewhat embarrassed, I resorted to a chattering dialogue about the people and buildings we passed. Holmes remained largely silent, although he was watching me with a friendly, almost amused expression. Had I known him better I would have been even more disconcerted, for with his uncanny ability to deduce the whole from its constituent parts, I was inadvertently baring my soul to him in a manner I would never consciously have done. At length, he reached across to me, laying his hand gently on my thigh.

I started at the sudden and unexpected contact, glancing sharply at my companion who remained completely unruffled by this show of alarm. "Nothing to fear, old fellow," he said softly. "But you are such a handsome chap, I find it difficult to keep my hands off you. You don't mind, I hope?"

"Well . . . er . . . under the circumstances . . ." I stammered. "No," I managed at last. "No, in fact, it's rather pleasant. Your hand is so warm . . . and large . . ."

My companion laughed aloud. "That is quite an interesting comment," he remarked. "Tell me, as a doctor, do you adhere to the belief in a correlation between the sizes of various cartilaginous membranes?" There was a definite twinkle in his eyes, now, and I realized he was alluding to that particular portion of his body that must remain presently hidden from my view.

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"I have never given it a great deal of thought," I replied, "but I would suppose there is some logic to support such a conclusion. Certainly, the size of one's hands and feet do seem to bear a predictable relationship."

"Yes, indeed," he muttered. "Yes, indeed." Then, quite boldly, he permitted his fingers to slide across my thigh, coming to rest with the tips of his long, heavy digits against the growing mound between my legs. "Fas-

cinating!" he breathed softly.

Outside, the shadows of evening had lengthened into a cloak of total darkness, with only an occasional gaslight to break the heavy gloom. Inside our hansom it was quite black, and there was little possibility of anyone being able to see us. Taking advantage of this, Holmes leaned his body against me, slipping an arm about my waist and pressing his warm, thin lips tightly on mine. Though surprised at this display of unguarded passion, I was both pleased and excited by it—my arousal only heightened by the potential danger of so public a contact. As he held me ever more tightly against himself, I felt my senses whirl into a maelstrom of lust. Only the sharp, steady "clipclop" of our horse's hooves penetrated my awareness to remind me where I was.

We were still huddled tightly together when the hansom began to slow, and the driver's voice announced our arrival. "Two-twenty-one Baker Street!" he called.

Holmes paid the driver and conducted me into the house. We proceeded immediately up the stairs; and, although a tall, rather dour-appearing woman poked her head out of a door in the lower hall, my companion seemed to take no notice of her. This, as I would later learn, was Mrs. Hudson, the landlady—or so she called herself. But that is another story! Holmes opened the unlocked door on the upper landing and motioned me inside.

The sitting room was large and comfortable, although my host had obviously not finished his unpacking. Boxes tied with string were stacked against one wall, and several bales of books were piled in a distant corner. Two doors let off the chamber, apparently connecting to a pair of bedrooms. These joined, I discovered, through a bath. There was no kitchen or any sort of cooking facility, for the landlady served breakfast, supper, and afternoon tea as a part of the monthly contract.

In keeping with Holmes' direct and positive nature, he said very little after he closed the door behind us. There was a subtle glow of heat and reddish light from the hearth, but other than this the room was quite dark. Not even taking time to ignite a gaslight, my companion turned to me and encircled my torso with both his arms, drawing me against his slender body with a degree of strength I would hardly have credited him with having. Once again, his lips crushed on mine, and this time he forced my mouth to open as his tongue darted between my teeth. There was the heavy, pungent sweetness of aromatic tobacco on his breath and a musky maleness about his body that sent my senses reeling. I returned his embrace with all the urgency of my being, and this response encouraged a fresh surge of passion from him.

It was a delirious moment for me, a deeply absorbing exchange which affected my inner senses as no previous meeting ever had. Thus, from the very beginning, my affair with Sherlock Holmes took on an urgent significance that presaged its ultimate development. I found myself standing loose and helpless as my companion's long, deft fingers worked loose the buttons on my waist-coat, pushing this over my shoulders along with my jacket. He quickly plucked the stays from my shirt, working from the collar down, passing quickly over the center of my body to unfasten the front of my trousers. I was grateful for the lack of fuller illumination, for to be perfectly honest my undersuit was old and rather frayed.

I hardly remember how it happened after this, but my clothes were soon stripped completely from me, and within seconds, it seemed, I was standing stark naked in the middle of the sitting room. His dry, warm palms traced their I made a serie made a serie contours of course, I and my bod I had little h was held so hardly show "Magni

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traced their patterns across my musculature, and his lips made a series of soft, sucking sounds as he explored the contours of chest and groin and midsection. At the time, of course, I was quite young, as I have previously noted, and my body was extremely well-defined. Being blond, I had little hair except at head and pubis, and what there was held so light a hue and so downy a composition it hardly showed under even the brightest lamp.

"Magnificent!" said Holmes in a soft, breathy tone. His lips caressed my shoulder, where the dark scar from my recent wound still showed against the milky skin. Then he dropped his mouth to my left nipple, where he proceeded to draw and knead the flesh while spasms of delight coursed through me. I was quite beyond any recall then, and likewise past caring what circumstances had brought us together. His every motion across my flesh was electric, so fiercely arousing that it left no room for other thoughts. One arm lingered about my waist, the rough tweed of his sleeve serving to emphasize my nakedness as opposed to his own state of being fully clothed. Yet even this produced a certain thrill of expectancy, a sensation of raw and almost savage surrender.

Without disengaging his lips from my nipple, where they continued to cast forth the wildest, most furious waves of euphoric warmth, my companion allowed his free hand to wander gently across the firm ridges of my belly, finally coming to rest upon the full hardness of my penis. Adoringly, almost reverently, his fingers explored the width and extension of my member, grasping the shaft within his palm, and seeming to measure its dimensions against the breadth of his hand. "Marvellous!" he whispered. "John, you are truly an exceptional boy!"

"Hardly a boy," I replied. "I am almost five-andtwenty."

"You still retain the sweetness of youth," he murmured. His lips still worked against my teat, and his voice vibrated through me in heated, thrilling waves. He stood, finally, and crushed me against him, holding me fulllength across the nubby fabric of his hound's tooth coat. Through the lighter material of his trousers, I could feel his own responding hardness. From this, as well as from the deeply drawn breaths against my face and neck, I knew he was fully as aroused as I.

Slowly, he began guiding me across the darkened room, toward the door to the left of the hearth. Glacing down, I could see the patches of redness reflected to outline the rigid planes of my body, the shadows delineating each well-formed thew and sinew. Standing proudly erect, above the apex of my legs, my cock arched upward, bobbing in stiff, almost defiant salute in response to the motions of my walking. Protruding through the thick folds of foreskin, the crown glistened in moist evidence of my arousal.

My bare feet soon touched the richer carpet of Holmes' bedchamber, as we continued our progress toward the wide, four-poster bed that stood against the farther wall. With a quick flick of his wrist, my companion stripped the counterpane and blankets, gently pushing me down on my back, upon the cool luxurious satin sheet. This room was even darker than the other, although there was a soft, silvery aura from the street light outside the window. Lying quietly in the darkness, I watched as Sherlock Holmes stood beside the bed and removed his clothes. Carelessly, he tossed these aside until he was down to his undergarments, at which I noted he was wearing one of those new, two-piece sets of vest and drawers. I must have gasped, because I had always thought this somewhat extreme for a gentleman of good taste.

Holmes chuckled when he heard me, and muttered some remark about the greater freedom such undergarments gave him. "Lets the prick and bollicks swing," he added. "Keeps one always ready and alert."

His entire body was now exposed to my view, although the forward portions were largely in such heavy shadows that I could not clearly see the form. While unquestionably lean and slender, my companion displayed

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a far more symmetrical physique than I would have expected. Deeply corded muscles covered his chest and abdomen, while the definition of his arms and legs was really quite exceptional. His erection, while a trifle smaller in circumference than mine, was of phenomenal extension. As I subsequently discovered by actual measurement, it attained to slightly over nine inches from base to tip—this statistic being achieved along its upper lateral.

As if aware of my admiring observation, Holmes stood motionless for several seconds, staring down at me. Totally naked, his hard-flexed frame was softly outlined in lights and shadows by the glow from the street. Watching him, my entire body seemed to burst into flame, and I experienced a passionate desire, unmatched by any remembrance of previous sensation. I think he smiled, though this was difficult to discern in the uncertain light, and abruptly cast himself upon me. Hungrily, he buried his face against the muscles of my chest and shoulders, applying his teeth to my flesh as if he indeed intended to devour me. This generated such a fierce response within me, I lost all awareness of time or place, and simply clung to him while mounting lust forced a series of animated groans and protestations of affection from my lips.

I could feel the powerful pressure of his lengthy member between my thighs, and as he continued to gnaw and suck at my skin his hips undulated in a steady rhythm, driving the rigid shaft against the underside of my crotch. My own cock was pressed between us, crushed and rubbed in tantalizing confinement as the hard wall of his lower belly moved against mine. Finally I could restrain myself no longer, for the wild pleasure deriving from his ferocious assault was exciting me beyond endurance. Using all my strength, I placed my hands against his shoulders and forcibly lifted his torso away from me. Twisting quickly, I brought my head about until my lips lay within grasp of his singular manhood.

I closed about the willowy lance, and Holmes seemed suddenly to weaken. His body collapsed half upon me, his arms falling upward above his head as he slowly settled onto his back. His legs still rested upon my thighs, so I had to bend myself double in order to maintain my grip about his cock. I began working my lips up and down along the solid column, drawing him into me until I choked and sputtered in an effort to force the enormous projection down my throat. All this while, Holmes reclined with hardly a movement of his body, silent except for an occasional groan and the deep, shuddering gasps of his heavy breathing.

My hands grasped the sides of his waist, holding the lean, hard flesh in place as I ground my face against the coarse, wiry bristles of his groin. My chin grazed the heavy orbs of his testicles, where they hung in the deeply suspended sac, cradled between the lower curve of his arse and the bed, itself. The heady aroma of his arousal rose in waves of moist warmth from the depths of his crotch, bringing with it his essential maleness.

At length, his hands moved to stroke the back of my head and neck, and his hips set up a regular, driving pace to propel the slick, hard-risen cylinder against the membranes of my hals. I was trembling with excitement, then, and felt a like response in my companion. Expecting he would achieve a climax at any moment, I quickened my possession, sucking and drawing at his glans to provide the maximum stimulation. Holmes, however, had other ideas.

With an abrupt shifting of his position, he sat up on the bed, yanking his swollen prick from my grasp. Shoving me flat upon my back, he knelt astride my thighs and ground his mouth fully down the length of my penis, taking it totally and completely into him without pause or hesitation. This sudden warm, wet enclosure caused such a spasm of thrilling delight to course through my veins that I dropped my head backward on the pillow and arched upward from my hips and belly. This drove my questing column more deeply into him, which only seemed to intensify the pleasure he took in its possession. I felt

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nose and cheekbones.

I wanted to shriek with delight, but contented myself with thrashing my head from side to side, and wrapping my legs about him. My calves were shoved tightly into his armpits, my toes touching in the middle of his back. Then he released my penis and dropped his lips to touch my anus, grazing the scrotum with his tongue as he descended. This organ now probed gently at my puckered canal, dabbing hotly, wetly at the tight-closed opening as if asking permission to enter. Finally he inserted the tip, parting the sphincter as his tongue glided within, moistening and lubricating the passage as wave after wave of unbridled passion swept through my body. I was so weak from emotion that I could have denied him nothing, and while I knew he was preparing me for an unaccustomed assault, I did not protest.

Nor did Holmes ask for my consent. After a considerable time, spent probing and preparing the channel, he simply raised his upper body, spat upon his hands, and applied the lubricating film to his lengthy protuberance. Centering the crown against my anus, he adjusted the position of my legs across his shoulders and began to ease himself into me. Because his shaft tended to be slender, the initial penetration was accomplished without undue difficulty. My body responded to him, and I felt the first, pleasurable sensations as his glans slipped past the grip of my muscle-ring.

He paused, then, allowing me to adjust to his possession. I had closed my eyes, so my awareness consisted almost completely of the glorious, swelling euphoria occasioned by my impalement. Gradually, he continued to enter me, pressing his groin ever closer to my willing, unobstructed passage. I was so completely beyond any possibility of retreat by then, I actually pulled him further into me by tightening the pressure of my legs upon his shoulders. His great length slid forward until tiny

fingers of pain expanded through my viscera and blinding flashes of light streamed before my eyes. I whimpered softly, begging him to take me, and finally experienced the ultimate joy of feeling his bristly pubic hair collide gratingly agaist my sac.

Again, Holmes hesitated, permitting both of us to savor the fullness of our joining. Gradually all elements of discomfort subsided, until I was ready for the pounding assault Holmes now began to deliver. I opened my eyes, gazing up at his face in the darkness. He smiled at me tenderly, and bent his neck to kiss me lightly on the lips. "John!" he whispered, simply. "John . . ." He said no more; but the expression in his eyes, even the little I could discern in the gloom, denoted a depth of feeling which transcended the basic lust of our interaction.

As he resumed his gentle, pumping motion, rocking and grinding his loins into the cradle of my legs, I seized the hardened shaft of my own penis and began massaging its length in time with the motion of Holmes' body against me. The dual, combined pleasure—his penetration and the fresh stirring in my testicles that resulted from my masturbation—cast me once again into the throes of renewed desire. I shoved my lower body upward to meet his every thrust,—writhing, moaning, trembling as I felt his manhood swell within me. Emotionally, I was just as affected as he, and while I would have denied the possibility prior to our initial meeting, I suddenly realized that it was the first thrill of love that made this moment so complete.

"That a bit of buggery should so completely change one's life!" remarked Holmes several days later. He smiled at me, reaching out to grasp my arm in a firm, warm grip.

"A change for the better, I hope." I returned his adoring look, and placed my palm on top of his, squeezing it gently.

He bent to kiss the back of my hand and chuckled softly. "Very much so!" he whispered.

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"Right," I admitted.

And so my long, fulfi Holmes began. To the rest bachelor gentlemen sharin venient and economical to door at 221B Baker Street we shared such moments anyone outside ourselves lieved, even if told,

Only a handful of people actually passed between upon the beloved "land sion of this extraordinary a frame and manner of a explained it to me.

"Neither of us is old san in Paris, known simple esque beauty will addy of

and anally experienced Whimpad whimpad Pubic hair collide permitting both of us h Gradually all elements of I could ask."

"I feel I opened my eye replied. the darkness. He smiled at the the cradle of my legs, I seized right?" wn penis and began massaging notion of Holmes' body against would have denied the possi lieved, even if told. eting. I suddenly realized that second so completely change s several days later. He suits any arm in a firm, warm gip ser, I hope" I returned his s gazden can top of his, spect and any hand and checkly

We were sitting side-by-side on the divan, in what was now our front room. Holmes had insisted I move in with him, and had refused even to consider my sharing the rent. "When you are fully recovered from your illness," he told me, "we can discuss your financial contribution. For the moment, just having you with me is all

"I feel rather a fool, not pulling my own weight," I

He smiled at m "Nonsense!" Holmes retorted. "But if it will "Nonsense!" Holmes retorted. "But if it will "Nonsense!" He said you feel better, we shall maintain appearances by telling you feel better, we split all expenses down the middle. In the "Nonsense: "Nonsense: "Nonsense: "Nonsense: "Nonsense: "He said to the world we split all expenses down the middle. In the even the lime the world we split all expenses down the middle. In the lime the lime the world we split all expenses down the middle. In the lime the lime the world we split all expenses down the middle. In the lime the lime the lime the lime the world we split all expenses down the middle. In the lime denoted a depth of the meanwhile, you can owe me your half, and as this will meanwhile in debt to me I shall never fear to lose denoted a depth of feeling keep you eternally in debt to me I shall never fear to lose pumping motion, rocking departing when there is a sum owing his house-mate,

"Right," I admitted.

And so my long, fulfilling relationship with Sherlock Measure his penetration and Holmes began. To the rest of the world we were a pair of sticles that resulted from my bachelor gentlemen sharing quarters because it was cone again into the throes of re venient and economical to do so. Between us, once the lower body upward to met door at 221B Baker Street was closed against the world, moaning, trembling as I fel we shared such moments of blissful contentment I doubt Emotionally, I was just a anyone outside ourselves could have understood or be-

Only a handful of people knew or even suspected what actually passed between us. And one of these was Mrs. Hudson, our beloved "landlady". Though my first impression of this extraordinary person was that she manifested a frame and manner of almost masculine size and attitude, I could not begin to surmise the truth until Holmes explained it to me.

"Neither of us is old enough to remember," he said, "but a number of years ago there was a fabulous courtesan in Paris, known simply as Violetta—the name taken, I believe, from The Lady of the Camellias. She was a statuesque beauty, with auburn hair and gleaming satin skin,

a woman of such unbelievably feminine loveliness that she had half the crowned heads of Europe falling over themselves to kiss her hand. It was rumored that the Emperor Napoleon III spent an entire week with her on the Riviera. It was a scandal that rocked the very core of the Empire, too, for his dear Eugénie very nearly decamped from the imperial palace as a result."

"You aren't trying to tell me our Mrs. Hudson is the

fabulous Violetta?" I gasped in amazement.

"Not only that, my dear fellow, but if you should chance someday to raise our dear landlady's skirts . . ."

"Holmes!" I exclaimed, shocked that he should sug.

gest such immorality. "What an indecent idea!"

My friend burst out laughing, then, holding his sides and quaking until the tears were running down his face. "Oh, my dear fellow! If you could only guess what reposes between the thighs of that proper, elderly dowager!"

I was beginning to grasp what Holmes implied, but the truth still seemed incomprehensible to me. "She . . .

er . . . he . . . ?" I gasped.

"Yes, yes!" he shrieked. "She is indeed a he, and the appendage that evidences this would put us both to shame."

A short while after this, Mrs. Hudson came upstairs with our afternoon tea. Trying to be unobtrusive, I glanced at her withered features and satisfied myself that there were traces of beard beneath the paint and powder adhering to her cheeks. From the corner of my vision I could see Holmes watching me, a twinkle in his eyes and

a subtle smile upon his lips.

"Mrs. Hudson," he said suddenly, "I have been telling Dr. Watson, here, what little I know of your fabulous career, and I know he is most interested to learn more about your experiences. Er, from a professional standpoint, of course," he added hastily. "Our landlady" had straightened up abruptly and cast a scornful eye upon us both. Then, quite unexpectedly, her features softened and she smiled at me, revealing a momentary glimpse of her former loveliness.

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Mrs. Hudson came upsing to be unobtraste, wing to be unobtraste, area and satisfied myself is meath the paint and posteromeath the corner of my issue the corner of my issue a twinkle in his spars.

saddenly, "I have been a land of your finds a profession by and a profession by and a feature substitute and a feature su

"Of course, dearie," she said. "You're such a pretty boy, I should be delighted to tell you of my adventures." With that, she eased her ample buttocks onto the couch between us, and launched into such a description of her between us, and launched into such a description of her years on the Continent that her words brought a flush of years on the Continent to my face. She had truly led a embarrassed amazement to my face. She had truly led a remarkable life,—but again, that is another story. It would fill a mighty volume in and of itself.

There was another pair of gentlemen who suspected, at least, what the relationship between Holmes and myself might be. These were the two famous inspectors from Scotland Yard—Gregson and Lestrade. I was soon to meet both of these master detectives in the course of the first case in which I had the opportunity to observe Holmes at work. Again, I would never have suspected the truth about these hounds of the constabulary had Holmes not explained it to me beforehand.

"A year or so ago," he told me, "Gregson and Lestrade were lovers. It was just a run-of-the-mill affair, and I am certain it did not last more than a month or two. However, they parted on somewhat less than friendly terms and have been the most deadly rivals ever since. Inasmuch as they constitute the best of a poor lot at the Yard, their rather obviously keen competition is the talk of their peers. Of the two, I think, Lestrade has the greater possibility of someday making a capable detective, although Gregson's experience gives him the momentary edge. From a physical standpoint, too, I must say Tobias Gregson is the more appealing. You will see them for yourself one of thelp, as I always do, when there is a case they are unable to solve."

"Which reminds me," I replied. "When we first met, you indicated an awareness that I had recently come from Afghanistan. How did you know this? Or did Stamford mention it in his note?"

"Nothing of the sort, my dear," Holmes replied. "It was merely the application of deductive logic, and rather

an elementary example at that. I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, 'Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his face is haggard despite his obvious youth. He holds his left arm as if it were injured. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.' The whole train of thought did not occupy a second. I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished."

"Extraordinary!" I replied.

"Not really, my dear fellow," he assured me. "I look forward to our sharing some far more interesting tests of my deductive ability in the future."

The very next day, two of my companion's predictions came to pass. A STUL LAVENDE PART THE QUE IN LAURISTIN

The next morning I happened dow, watching the passers-by or had completed his current seem laboratory and was in the flat he intended to submit later in been partially an excuse to remove continued to manifest an attraction is looking for?" I asked, point dressed individual who was wall had a large blue envelope in heart of a message.

"You mean the retired seems of the street of a message."

A STUDY IN LAVENDER LACE

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The next morning I happened to be standing by the window, watching the passers-by on the street below. Holmes had completed his current series of experiments at the laboratory and was in the flat working on a monograph he intended to submit later in the month. This may have been partially an excuse to remain with me, for we each continued to manifest an attraction for the other that seemed incapable of satiation. "I wonder what that fellow is looking for?" I asked, pointing to a stalwart, plainly dressed individual who was walking slowly down the other side of the street, looking anxiously at the numbers. He had a large blue envelope in his hand, and was evidently the bearer of a message.

"You mean the retired sergeant of Marines?" said Sherlock Holmes, coming up behind us. "Brag and bounce!" thought I to myself. "He knows that I cannot verify his guess."

The thought had hardly passed through my mind when the man whom we were watching caught sight of the number on our door, and ran rapidly across the road. way. We heard a loud knock, a deep voice below, and heavy steps ascending the stair.

"For Mr. Sherlock Holmes," he said, stepping into

the room and handing my friend the letter.

Here was an opportunity of taking the conceit out of him. He little thought of this when he made that random shot. "May I ask, my lad," I said in the blandest voice, "what your trade might be?"

"Commissionaire, sir," he said, with a slightly malicious glance at my companion. "A sergeant, sir, Royal Marine Light Infantry, sir. No answer? Right, sir."

He clicked his heels together, raised his hand in sa-

lute, and was gone.

I confess that I was considerably startled by this fresh proof of the practical nature of my companion's theories. My respect for his powers of analysis increased wondrously. There still remained some lurking suspicion in my mind, however, that the whole thing was a prearranged episode, intended to dazzle me. When I looked at him, he had finished reading the note, and his eyes had assumed the vacant, lack-lustre expression which showed mental abstraction.

"How in the world did you deduce that?" I asked.

"Deduce what?" said he, petulantly.

"Why, that he was a retired sergeant of Marines?"

"I have no time for trifles," he answered brusquely; then with a smile, "Excuse my rudeness, my dear. You broke the thread of my thoughts; but perhaps it is as well. So you actually were not able to see that that man was a sergeant of Marines?"

"No, indeed."

"It was easier to know it than to explain why I knew it. If you were asked to prove that two and two made four,

you might find some did of the fact. Even across of the fact. Even across of the sea. He anchor tattooed on He smacked of the sea. He smacked of the sea. He was a man with som He was a man with som He was a man with som a certain air of comma a certain air of comma a certain air of comma a teady, respectable, mid steady, respectable, mid steady

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you might find some difficulty, and yet you are quite sure of the fact. Even across the street I could see a great blue anchor tattooed on the back of the fellow's hand. That smacked of the sea. He had a military carriage, however, regulation side whiskers, and displayed a most distinctive bulge along his left inner thigh. There we have the marine. He was a man with some amount of self-importance and a certain air of command. You must have observed the way in which he held his head and swung his cane. A steady, respectable, middle-aged man, too, on the face of him—all facts which led me to believe that he had been a sergeant."

"Wonderful!" I ejaculated.

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"Commonplace," said Holmes, though I thought from his expression that he was pleased at my evident surprise and admiration. "But I told you yesterday I hoped soon to be provided with an opportunity for the exercise of my abilities toward a more constructive end. I think that time may have just arrived."

He tossed the letter to me, and I quickly scanned its contents. "Why," I cried, "this is terrible!"

"It does seem a little out of the common," he remarked calmly. "Would you mind reading it to me aloud?"

This is the letter I read to him—
"MY DEAR MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES:

"There has been a bad business during the night at 3, Lauriston Gardens, off the Brixton Road. Our man on the beat saw a light there about two in the morning, and as the house was an empty one, suspected that something was amiss. He found the door open, and in the front room, which is almost bare of furniture, discovered the partially clothed body of a gentleman. The deceased was dressed only in a pair of blood-stained, lavender-coloured lady's drawers, the rest of his things being scattered about the floor. A card in the pocket of his suit coat identified him as 'Enoch J. Drebber, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.' There had been no robbery, nor was there any evidence as to how

the blood got on his undergarments, as there was no wound upon his person. We are at a loss as to how he came into the empty house; indeed, the whole affair is a puzzler. If you can come round to the house any time before twelve, you will find me there. I have left everything in statu quo until I hear from you. If you are able to come, I shall give you fuller details, and would esteem it a great kindness if you would favor me with your opinions.

"Yours faithfully, "TOBIAS GREGSON."

"As I told you, Gregson is presently the best of the Scotland Yarders," my friend remarked. "His sending for me is further proof of his judgment. Both he and Lestrade are quick and energetic, but conventional—shockingly so. And, of course, having their knives into one another, our two beauties are no doubt vying in jealous contest, each anxious to produce a solution ahead of the other. There will be some fun over this case if they are both put on the scent."

I was amazed at the calm way in which he rippled on. "Surely there is not a moment to be lost," I cried. "Shall I go and order you a cab?"

"I'm not sure about whether I shall go. I am the most incurable lazy devil that ever stood in shoe leather—that is, when the fit is on me, for I can be spry enough at times. Just now, I think my energies might better be spent elsewhere." His glance darted between my crotch and the open door of our bedchamber, his unspoken suggestion so open, even I had no difficulty deducing it.

"Really, Holmes," I replied. "As a consulting detective I do not see how you can ignore such a request. Besides, it is just such a chance as you have been longing for."

"My dear, what does it matter to me? Besides my preference for your company, suppose I should unravel the whole matter. You may be sure Gregson, Lestrade, and

Co. will pocket all the cre "But he begs you to help him unofficial personage. "Yes. He knows that I am hi edges it to me; but, he would eur than own it to any third person. H go and have a look. I shall work is have a laugh at them, if I have m He hustled on his overcoat, way that showed an energetic apathetic one. "Get your hat," he said. "You wish me to come?" "Yes, if you have nothing b later we were both in a hansom, Brixton Road.

It was a foggy, cloudy morn veil hung over the housetops, loo the mud-coloured streets beneath the best of spirits, allowing his groin while he prattled away about the difference between a Strad Being somewhat of a fiddler, him to obsess him. As for myself. I weather and the melancholy businengaged depressed my spirits.

"You don't seem to give main hand," I said at last, interrupt

"No data yet," he answered to theorize before you have all to

"You will have your data sing with my finger; "this is the bouse, if I am not very much yards or so from it, but he instance our journ

Co. will pocket all the credit. That comes of being an unofficial personage."

"But he begs you to help him," I insisted.

"Yes. He knows that I am his master, and acknowledges it to me; but, he would cut off his testicles rather than own it to any third person. However, we may as well go and have a look. I shall work it out on my own. I may have a laugh at them, if I have nothing else. Come on!"

He hustled on his overcoat, and bustled about in a way that showed an energetic fit had superseded the

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"Get your hat," he said.

"You wish me to come?"

"Yes, if you have nothing better to do." A minute later we were both in a hansom, driving furiously for the Brixton Road.

It was a foggy, cloudy morning, and a dun-coloured veil hung over the housetops, looking like a reflection of the mud-coloured streets beneath. My companion was in the best of spirits, allowing his hand to rest upon my groin while he prattled away about Cremona fiddles and the difference between a Stradivarius and an Amati. Being somewhat of a fiddler, himself, the subject seemed to obsess him. As for myself, I was silent, for the dull weather and the melancholy business upon which we were engaged depressed my spirits.

"You don't seem to give much thought to the matter in hand," I said at last, interrupting Holmes' musical dis-

quisition.

"No data yet," he answered. "It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment."

"You will have your data soon," I remarked, pointing with my finger; "this is the Brixton Road, and that is the house, if I am not very much mistaken."

"So it is. Stop, driver, stop!" We were still a hundred yards or so from it, but he insisted upon our alighting and we finished our journey on foot.

Number 3, Lauriston Gardens wore an ill-omened and minatory look. It was one of four which stood empty, looking out upon the street with three tiers of vacant, melancholy windows. The whole place was very sloppy from the rain which had fallen through the night. The garden was bounded by a three-foot brick wall, with a fringe of wood rails upon the top. Against this leaned a stalwart police constable, surrounded by a small knot of loafers, all craning their necks in the vain hope of catching some glimpse of the proceedings within.

I had imagined that Sherlock Holmes would at once have hurried into the house and plunged into a study of the mystery. Nothing appeared to be further from his intention. With an air of nonchalance which, under the circumstances, seemed to me to border upon affectation, he lounged up and down the pavement, and gazed vacantly at the ground, the sky, the opposite houses and the line of railings. Having finished his scrutiny, he proceeded slowly down the path, or rather down the fringe of grass which flanked the path, keeping his eyes riveted upon the ground. Twice he stopped, and once I saw him smile, muttering an exclamation of satisfaction. There were many marks of footsteps upon the wet, clay-like soil; but since the police had been coming and going over it, I was unable to see how my companion could hope to learn anything from it. Still, I had had such extraordinary evidence of the quickness of his perceptive faculties, I had no doubt he could see a great deal which was hidden from me.

At the door of the house we were met by a tall, flaxen-haired young man, with beautifully delicate, even features. He held a notebook in his hand as he rushed forward and grasped my companion's arm with almost effeminate effusion. "It is indeed kind of you to come," he said, "I have had everything left untouched." His last words trailed off as his gaze fell on me, but Holmes ignored his obvious interest.

"Untouched excepthe Pathway. not be a great there could not be you had drawn your own you permitted this. "I have had so much the detective pouled. -Be colleague, Mr. Lestrade, to look after this." A slig Gregson's eyes. Holmes glanced at m along his eyebrow. "With self and Lestrade upon the for a third party to find o Gregson coloured a gether in a self-satisfied that can be done," he as more ways than one, and things I was sure you won to let you know about it." "Did you come her Holmes. "No, dear," answered sure no one heard him. "Nor Lestrade?" "No, sir," he replies stable brushed past them. "Then let us go look consequent remark Hohos lowed by Gregson whose slowed as his mind struck Sherlock Holmes' remarks A short passage, bas kitchen and offices. Two de and to the right. One of for many weeks The

"Untouched except that!" he answered, pointing at the pathway. "If a herd of buffaloes had passed along there could not be a greater mess. No doubt, however, you had drawn your own conclusions, Gregson, before you permitted this."

"I have had so much to do inside the house . . ." the detective pouted. "Besides," he said brightly, "my colleague, Mr. Lestrade, is here. I had relied upon him to look after this." A slight gleam of triumph showed in

Gregson's eyes.

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Holmes glanced at me, sardonically running a finger along his eyebrow. "With two such clever ladies as yourself and Lestrade upon the ground, there will not be much

for a third party to find out," he said softly.

Gregson coloured a bit, but rubbed his hands together in a self-satisfied way. "I think we have done all that can be done," he answered. "It's a queer case, in more ways than one, and knowing your interest in such things I was sure you would be simply furious if I failed to let you know about it."

"Did you come here in a cab?" asked Sherlock

Holmes.

"No, dear," answered Gregson, glancing about to be sure no one heard him.

"Nor Lestrade?"

"No, sir," he replied, in a deeper voice, as a constable brushed past them.

"Then let us go look at the room." With which inconsequent remark Holmes strode on into the house, followed by Gregson whose ladylike tread seemed somewhat slowed as his mind struggled to grasp the reasons behind Sherlock Holmes' remarks.

A short passage, bare-planked and dusty, led to the kitchen and offices. Two doors opened out of it to the left and to the right. One of these had obviously been closed for many weeks. The other belonged to the dining-room, which was the apartment in which the mysterious affair

had occurred. Holmes walked in, and I followed him with the subdued feeling at my heart which presence of death inspires.

It was a large square room, looking all the larger for the absence of furniture. A vulgar, flaring paper adorned the walls, but it was blotched in places with mildew, and here and there great strips had become detached. On one corner of the showy fireplace mantel was stuck the stump of a single red wax candle. The solitary window was so dirty that the light was hazy and uncertain, giving a dull

gray tinge to everything.

All these details I observed afterwards. At present my attention was centered upon the single, grim, motionless figure which lay stretched upon a couch—the only piece of furniture-with vacant, sightless eyes staring up at the discoloured ceiling. It was that of a man about forty-three or forty-four years, middle-sized, broad-shouldered, with crisp curling black hair, and a short, stubbly beard. He was dressed, as Gregson had indicated, in frilly drawers of lavender lace, much in contrast to the hirsute. robust masculinity of his remains. His hands were clenched and his arms thrown back, as if elevated in the face of a menacing weapon. On his rigid features there stood an expression of pain and horror, and, as it seemed to me, of hatred. This malignant and terrible contortion, combined with the low forehead, blunt nose, and prognathous jaw, gave the dead man a singularly simious and ape-like appearance, this increased by his writhing, unnatural posture. I have seen death in many forms, but never has it appeared to me in a more fearsome aspect.

Lestrade, lean and strangely appealing in a pinched, ferret-like way, was standing by the doorway and greeted

my companion and myself.

"This case will make a stir, sir," he remarked. "It beats anything I've seen, living or dead!"

"You have found no additional clue?" said Gregson. "None at all," chimed Lestrade. Like his fellow deforing arm about m of whom smiled in a he approached the a intendly. You are minting to numer lay all round. "Positive!" cr Then, of cou dividual-presuma committed." He one reported on 1 all the while his and everywhere, ejes wore the sa noted. At one po lavender drawers which reposed a Finally, he sniffe patent leather he "He has not "No more ! examination." "You can Holmes, "There Gregson ha call they enterv and carried out and rolled acro

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"There's woman's world tective, he spoke to Sherlock Holmes while directing his

Curious attention toward me.

At the moment, we four were the only occupants of

At the moment, we four were the only occupants of the room, save for the dead man. Holmes placed a comforting arm about me and introduced his colleagues, both of whom smiled in a knowing, friendly fashion. After that, he approached the body, and, kneeling down, examined it intently. "You are sure there is no wound?" he asked, pointing to numerous gouts and splashes of blood which lay all round.

"Positive!" cried both detectives.

"Then, of course, this blood belongs to a second individual—presumably the murderer, if murder has been
committed." He went on to compare the present case to
one reported on the Continent several years before, and
all the while his nimble fingers were flying here, there,
and everywhere, feeling, pressing, examining, while his
eyes wore the same far-away expression I had earlier
noted. At one point he even stretched the elastic of the
lavender drawers, exposing the fat, tubular appendage
which reposed at an upward vector against the groin.
Finally, he sniffed the dead man's lips and reached for his
patent leather boots, examining the soles minutely.

"He has not been moved at all?" he asked.

"No more than was necessary for the purpose of our examination."

"You can take him to the mortuary now," said Holmes. "There is nothing more to be learned."

Gregson had a stretcher and four men at hand. At his call they entered the room, and the stranger was lifted and carried out. As they raised him, a ring tinkled down and rolled across the floor. Lestrade grabbed it up and stared at it with mystified eyes.

"There's been a woman here," he cried. "It's a woman's wedding ring!"

He held it out as he spoke, upon the palm of his hand. We all gathered round him and gazed at it. There

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could be no doubt that the circlet of plain gold was the symbol of a marriage relationship, but even to my untrained eyes it seemed rather too large for a female ring. finger.

"This complicates matters," said Gregson. "Heaven

knows, they were complicated enough before."

"You're sure it doesn't simplify them?" observed Holmes. "There's nothing to be learned by staring at it,

What did you find in his pockets?"

"We have it all here," said Gregson, pointing to a litter of objects upon one of the bottom steps of the stairs. "A gold watch, gold Albert chain. Gold pin-bulldog's head, with rubies as eyes, Russian leather cardcase with cards of Enoch J. Drebber of Cleveland, corresponding with the E.J.D. upon his . . . er . . . linen. No purse. but loose money to the extent of seven pounds thirteen. Pocket edition of Wilde's Ballad of Reading Gaol, with name Joseph Stangerson upon the flyleaf. Two lettersone addressed to E. J. Drebber and one to Joseph Stangerson."

"At what address?"

"American Exchange, Strand-to be left till called for. They are both from the Guion Steamship Company, and refer to the sailing of their boats from Liverpool. It is clear that this unfortunate man was about to return to New York."

"Have you made any inquiries as to this man Stan-

gerson?"

"We telegraphed Cleveland this morning," said Gregson, "and have had advertisements of inquiry sent to all the local papers."

"How did you word your inquiries?"

"We simply detailed the circumstances, and said we should be glad of any information."

"You did not ask for particulars on any point which appeared to you to be crucial?"

"I asked about Stangerson."

et line sol at 1 have to see detail little Holmes debankled to him the about to make some remarks and led here in the front rooms while were arration in the half, respondent up in it hank in a post-pools and seek a the Greena he said of hour of the highest importance, and one he redocked had I not made a co the valls" The little man's eyes spartched as recidently in a state of suppressent in sound a point against his collector "One here," he said, bustling te anoshere of which felt cheaver of hebsty innate. "Now stand there." He strock a match on his boote arms beval "Look at that!" he said trius I have remarked that the pages per la his particular connex of the led peled off, leaving a yellow sequen by have this bare space there was total dougled bear "A" in the which touched the heat That do you think it has been Will be 100 Con Control of the Contr The State of the S

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"Nothing else? Is there no circumstance on which this whole case appears to hinge? Will you not telegraph "I have said all I have to say," said Gregson, in an again?"

offended tone.

Sherlock Holmes chuckled to himself, and appeared to be about to make some remark, when Lestrade, who had been in the front room while we were holding this conversation in the hall, reappeared upon the scene, rubbing his hands in a pompous and self-satisfied manner.

"Mr. Gregson," he said, "I have just made a discovery of the highest importance, and one which would have been overlooked had I not made a careful examination

of the walls."

The little man's eyes sparkled as he spoke, and he was evidently in a state of suppressed exultation at having scored a point against his colleague.

"Come here," he said, bustling back into the room, the atmosphere of which felt clearer since the removal of its ghastly inmate. "Now stand there!"

He struck a match on his boot and held it up against

the wall. "Look at that!" he said, triumphantly.

I have remarked that the paper had fallen away in parts. In this particular corner of the room a large piece had peeled off, leaving a yellow square of coarse plastering. Across this bare space there was scrawled in blood a wobbly, much elongated letter "A" or "R", and below this two circles which touched the bottom of the legs on the letter.

"What do you think of that?" cried the detective, with the air of a showman exhibiting his freaks. "It was overlooked because it was in the darkest corner of the room, but it certainly disposes of the idea this might be a suicide."

"And what does it mean now that you have found it?" asked Gregson in a deprecatory voice.

"Mean? Why it means the writer has written the

initial of the lady in question upon the wall, probably as an indication that she has been revenged for some terrible

"I really beg your pardon!" said my companion, who had ruffled the little man's temper by bursting into an explosion of laughter. "You certainly have the credit of being the first to find this, and it surely was written by the other occupant of the house last night. I have not had time to examine this room yet, but with your permission I shall do so now."

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As he spoke, he whipped a tape measure and a large magnifying glass from his pocket. With these, he trotted noiselessly about the room, his motions reminding me of a pure-blooded, well-trained foxhound. He missed nothing, apparently, although his examination was brief, ending with a careful scrutiny of the bloody symbol on the wall. Finishing this, he appeared to be satisfied, for he replaced his tape and glass in his pocket.

See State of State and Gregson and Lestrade had watched the manoeuvres of their amateur companion with considerable curiosity bind it is not not and some contempt. They evidently failed to appreciate t d and you found in month the fact, which I had begun to realize, that Sherlock APPEAR AND THE PARTY OF THE Holmes' smallest actions were all directed toward some

definite and practical end.

"What do you think of it, love?" asked Gregson.

"It would be robbing you of the credit of the case if I were to presume to help," remarked my friend. "You are doing so well, it would be a pity for anyone to interfere, though I shall stand ready to offer my advice if you should encounter any future, unforeseen difficulties. By the way, what was the name of the constable who found the body?"

Lestrade glanced at his notebook and Holmes jotted down the address: John Rance, 46 Audley Court, Kennington Park Gate.

"Come along, John," he said, "we shall go and look him up. I'll tell you a couple of things which may help you in the case," he continued, turning to the two detecI, probably a r some terrible my companion y bursting into have the credit was written by . I have not had your permission asure and a large these, he trotte ns reminding to d. He missed wh on was brief, ed ody symbol on b ket.

asked Gressi e credit of the or ked my fried for amore by Err ar adini COME MELL e control of

tives. "There has been murder done, and the murderer was a man. He was more than six feet high, was in the prime of life, had large feet for his height, wore coarse, square-toed boots and smoked a Trichinopoly cigar. He was homosexual, as was his victim, and the two of them arrived together in a four-wheeled cab. This was drawn by a horse with three old shoes and one new one on his left foreleg. In all probability the murderer had a florid face, and the fingernails of his right hand were remarkably long, as was the extension of his penis. These are only a few indications, but they may assist you."

Lestrade and Gregson glanced at each other with an

incredulous smile.

"If this man was murdered, how was it done?" asked

the former.

"He was asphyxiated by the insertion of a long, tubular member into the depths of his throat," said Sherlock Holmes, turning round at the door. "One other thing, ed the manus. Lestrade," he added. "I should not waste my time seeking nsiderable one out any ladies whose names begin with an "A" or an"R". failed to appear There is no lady in this case, and that crudely conceived alize that the bit of scrawl you found is merely a vulgar attempt to rected towards depict the murder weapon, namely, an upright penis!"

With which Parthian shot he walked away, leaving

the two rivals open-mouthed behind him.

The mental exercise seemed to invigorate Holmes immensely, and after stopping by the telegraph office to send a lengthy message, my friend suggested we go by the flat before dropping round to see the constable. Unfortunately, Mrs. Hudson saw us come in and insisted on detaining us for quite some time on the stairs, chattering about her reactions to press reports on the case. "She is probably a famous female impersonator," insisted the former courtesan, "perhaps even a lady of my own acquaintance."

"If this should seem to be the case, I shall certainly seek your advice," Holmes assured her, continuing to

edge his way up the stairs. "But I question whether those lace undergarments were placed upon the dead man's person before or after he was dead."

While Mrs. Hudson pondered that remark, we made it through the door, closing it soundly behind us. Holmes made at once to seize me, but I held him back long enough to ask what he had meant by what he said to Mrs. Hudson.

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A THE PARTY OF THE "Why, surely that must be clear enough to a medical man," he replied in an astonished tone. "Did you not observe when I lifted the elastic there was no mark of its tightness upon the skin? While they seemed to fit loosely enough not to have marked a man with rather thickish hide, I think our victim would more than likely have displayed some slight reddening had he worn those lavender lacies in life."

Further questions were forced to wait, for Holmes was not to be denied any longer. As quickly as he had that first night, he stripped the clothes from my body and escorted me into the bedroom, sealing my lips with his own each and every time I attempted to interrogate him. Finally, however, he did satisfy one point of confusion by straddling my chest and forcing the full length of his powerful, eager penis down my throat. Holding it in me at its maximum penetration, he stared down into my eyes until I slowly began to panic. I could not draw breath, and the presence of his monstrous shaft within my hals was forcing up streams of phlegm, which in turn added to the pre-existing constriction. At length, when I was on the verge of unconsciousness, he withdrew enough to let me pull in a lungful of air.

"That is how your murder was done," he told me, "and a most ironic, fittingly proper death it was, too, I'll wager—from the standpoint of our villain, of course," he added hastily.

After this, he swung himself about, again pressing his gnarled, demanding lance into my mouth while he began savouring my own erection. I could see his lean,

hard midsection flexing regularly as he pumped his loins hard midsection flexing regularly as he pumped his loins hard midsection flexing regularly as he pumped his loins are lines to the same time he was working his circular lines cock, his circular tongue about the crown of my stiffening cock, his circular ark, we took d us. Hoba motion forcing such a thrill of sensation through my body that I momentarily ceased to dwell upon the case.

m back lea I slid my hands along his thighs, and up the straining I slid my hands along his thighs, the lows walls of his midsection, settled finally upon the hollows walls of his midsection, almost fluid motion of his above his hips. The smooth, almost fluid motion of his muscles beneath my fingers made me wish to take him muscles beneath my fingers made income muscles beneath my fingers my fingers made income muscles beneath my fingers my fingers my fingers my fingers made income muscles beneath my fingers my finger deeper . . . farther, even, that he desire, I found I could do himself. Propelled by my own desire, I found I could do himself. Propelled by my own as himself. bolt without the least discomfort. For several seconds at a time, I pulled him down against me, compressed his pulsing bollicks upon my brow and eyelids, falling back, finally, to suck a rattling breath until desire flared anew and I repeated my former action.

I could feel Holmes' lips about my own column, and my both also felt the visceral contractions as he drove himself to match the depth of my possession. Again, it was an exmemoral pression of adoring love . . . and more, I sensed. It was of contract as if Sherlock Holmes drew some peculiar form of strength by his use of me, as if my sex provided him with a source of energy to renew and refresh himself. I never questioned him on this; yet, ever after, the thought occurred to me. As frequently happened in the course of our relationship, Holmes would break free of his involvewith a f ment in a case, and take me into the privacy of our bedin mo room or whatever other private place we might find. There he regained his quietude, and returned to his work as if reconstituted by a full night's rest.

at draw be

We left our flat in mid-afternoon. Holmes hailed a cab, and ordered the driver to take us to the address given him by Lestrade.

"There is nothing like a first-hand bit of evidence," he remarked; "as a matter of fact, my mind is entirely made up upon the case. But still, we may as well learn all that is to be learned." medicate news with amendown anged

"You amaze me, Holmes," said I. "Surely you are not as confident as you pretend to be of all those particu. lars which you gave the inspectors."

"There's no room for a mistake," he answered. "The very first thing I observed on arriving there was that a cab had made two ruts with its wheels close to the curb. Now, up to last night, we have had no rain for a week, so that those wheels which left such a deep impression must have been there during the night. There were the marks of the horse's hooves, too, the outline of one of which was far more clearly cut than the other three, showing that was a new shoe. Since the cab was there after the rain began, and was not there at any time during the morning -I have Gregson's word for that-it follows that it must have been there during the night, and therefore, that it brought those two individuals to the house."

"That seems simple enough," said I; "but how about the other man's height?"

"Why, the height of a man, in nine cases out of ten, can be told from the length of his stride. It is a simple calculation enough, though there is no use my boring you with figures. I was able to measure this fellow's stride both on the clay outside and on the dust within. Then I had a way of checking my calculations. When a man writes on a wall, his instinct leads him to write above the level of his own eyes. Now that writing was just over six feet from the ground. It was child's play."

"And his age?" I asked.

"Well, if a man can stride four and a half feet without the smallest effort, he can't be quite in the sere and yellow. That was the breadth of a puddle on the garden walk which he had evidently walked across. Patent-leather boots had gone round, and Square-toes had hopped over. There is no mystery about it at all. I am simply applying to ordinary life a few of those precepts of observation and deduction which I advocated in the monograph I just completed, and which you have so kindly proofread for me. Is there anything else that puzzles you?"

The writing on the wall w the dipped in blood. My sela in line of his nail above iser, itself. As to the cigar a sulf of various tobaccos, and as glance—a further faces of at of criminology." "I think I see why you a deer were homosexual," I ren also seemed so sure of the . . "The length of the penis

He strangled his victim with aranging manhood, at least o to further support my concl a lover of men-well, the remained erect during the think it rather more likely nent of the plan would b person."

"And the florid face?" "Ah, that was a more doubt that I was right. Yo present state of the affair." I passed my hand over whirl," I remarked; "the hysterious it grows. How were just two men—into come of the cabman wh assignation in an empty of passion or premeditati of both in the evidence. And the ring? I confess of reconciling all these My companion sm in a reassuring manner of ayou som up the

aid I. "Surely you at be of all those partice ake," he answered, "The riving there was that a sheels close to the cut ed no rain for a week & a deep impression ms t. There were the mark tline of one of which wa ther three, showing the was there after the ti at—it follows that it we ht, and therefore, that o the house."

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eads him to write about child's play."

de four and a half feet in't be quite in the se h of a puddle on the walked across Patri Square-loss had boy a se all I am simply

"The fingernails and the Trichinopoly," I suggested. "The writing on the wall was done with a man's forefinger dipped in blood. My glass allowed me to note the tiny line of his nail above the wider band from the finger, itself. As to the cigar ash, I have made a special study of various tobaccos, and can identify the residue at a glance—a further facet of my self-instruction in the art of criminology."

"I think I see why you stated both victim and murderer were homosexual," I remarked tentatively, "but you also seemed so sure of the . . . er . . . anatomical . . ."

"The length of the penis?" ne laugher.

"The length of the penis?" ne laugher.

He strangled his victim with it. No tiny nub, then,—rather to further support my conclusion that the murderer was a lover of men-wen, the mount of his endeavours. I remained erect during the course of his endeavours. I think it rather more likely both the concept and fulfilln, in nine cases out of ment of the plan would be the work of a homosexual

"And the florid face?" I asked.

"Ah, that was a more daring shot, though I have no on the dust within be doubt that I was right. You must not ask me that at the calculations. When 11 present state of the affair."

I passed my hand over my brow. "My head is in a whirl," I remarked; "the more one thinks of it, the more mysterious it grows. How came these two men-if there were just two men-into an empty house? What has become of the cabman who drove them? And why this assignation in an empty house, anyway? Was it a crime of passion or premeditation? There seem to be elements of both in the evidence. Where did the blood come from? And the ring? I confess that I cannot see any possibility of reconciling all these facts."

My companion smiled approvingly, patting my thigh in a reassuring manner.

"You sum up the difficulties succinctly and well," he said. "There is much that is still obscure, but though I am

certain of my conclusions I hesitate to apprise you of the full details lest I permit you to see how really simple it is, and you should come to the conclusion that I am a very ordinary individual after all."

"I shall never do that!" I answered, making bold to caress the long, cylindrical rise along his thigh. "You are a master craftsman, both in the art of detection and ... otherwise." I smiled at him, and my companion returned another glance of reassurance. He quite flushed up with pleasure in response to my double compliment. I had already observed that he was as sensitive to flattery on either the score of his detective or his sexual abilities as any girl could be of her beauty.

"I'll tell you one other thing," he said. "Patent-leathers and Square-toes came in the same cab, and they walked down the pathway together as friendly as possible, arm-in-arm in all probability. When they got inside, they walked up and down the room—or rather, patent-leathers stood still while Square-toes walked up and down. I could read all that in the dust; and I could read as well that Patent-leathers removed his clothes without a struggle, probably during the course of the other's movements. I should say the first sign of hostility on the part of our murderer came during the course of their interaction, and then as a complete surprise to the victim."

This conversation had occurred while our cab had been threading its way through a long succession of dingy streets and dreary byways. In the dingiest and dreariest of them our driver suddenly came to a stand. "That's Audley Court in there," he said, pointing to a narrow slit when you come back "You'll find me here

We waited some time on the dusty steps of Number 46, and could hear a hasty rustling activity within, this increasing in its desperate speed each time Holmes an extremely well-muscled young man, whose long, dark

the role in turnley disserves it we be exclaimed will from or hist blushed self-conscious He was bare-chested, wearing assable's uniform. In the fa non was an unmade bed, in ariously been lying when we There was an old, heavy Indiced a furtive motion who on a pair of straightsuble Rance sat on the co nother sheepish grin in oc person who hid behind the c he said, "Mr. 'Olmes is a fr Again, there was a sti second later a tousled, sand between the two panels, ho his chin. "My clothes . . them beside the bed." The distress, there was a sugge predicament in his eyes. Before either of us chuckled and gestured for "No need to 'ide," he these gentlemen are frier to see what I found mes The boy shrugged through the opening. In press a gasp of awed one of the most beauti Holmes reflected an o silence as the slender bare feet, taking his v "I must complia may I ask if this is "Oh, Yes

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me in the same cab, and gether as friendly as point. When they got inside to more rather, patentially as leading and down loss alked up a

long succession of the dingiest and drawn ne to a stand. The printing to a narrow of You'll find me her

dusty steps of Not ling activity within leach time Holms loor was opened by whose long, dark whose long, hair rode in tumbled disarray upon his head. "Oh,—Mr. "Olmes!" he exclaimed. "If I'd known it was you . . ." Our host blushed self-consciously, and motioned us inside. He was bare-chested, wearing only the trousers of his constable's uniform. In the farther corner of his squalid room was an unmade bed, in which the young man had obviously been lying when we arrived.

There was an old, heavy drape across one wall, and I noticed a furtive motion behind it as we settled ourselves on a pair of straight-backed, wooden chairs. Constable Rance sat on the corner of his bed, and with another sheepish grin in our direction, he called to the person who hid behind the curtain. "It's all right, Oliver," he said. "Mr. 'Olmes is a friend of mine."

Again, there was a stirring behind the drape, and a second later a tousled, sandy-haired youth poked his head between the two panels, holding the edges together below his chin. "My clothes . . ." he cried distractedly, "I left them beside the bed." Though his tone indicated some distress, there was a suggestion of amusement at his own predicament in his eyes.

Before either of us could comment, the constable chuckled and gestured for the boy to come out as he was. "No need to 'ide," he said encouragingly. "I told you these gentlemen are friends of mine. I'd like Mr. 'Olmes to see what I found meself, any'ow!"

The boy shrugged the material aside and stepped through the opening. In spite of myself, I could not suppress a gasp of awed astonishment, for this was surely one of the most beautiful youths I had ever seen. Even Holmes reflected an obvious appreciation by staring in silence as the slender, handsome boy padded across on bare feet, taking his place beside John Rance.

"I must compliment you," said Sherlock Holmes, "may I ask if this is a . . . er . . . permanent arrangement?"

"Oh, yes indeed, sir," replied the constable. "Oliver

has been living with me almost a year, now, and we would never think of separating. Would we, Ollie?" he added, turning towards the boy.

The youngster shook his head, almost as if he were bashful to recognize his lover's question. I noted, how. ever, a suggestion of knowing smirk on his features, but because of his posture this was not visible to John Rance. Holmes watched them with the attitude of a pleased benefactor for several more seconds before his expression became more serious. "Well," he said, "to the point of our visit, John. I am curious to hear from your own lips exactly what happened in the house on Brixton Road last evening."

"Oh yes, I expected as much," said the big man, moving uncomfortably as if my companion's words boded some particularly painful result. "Ah . . . Ollie, why don't you throw on some clothes and run fetch us a bucket'a 'alf-n-alf?" he suggested.

"Really, Constable Rance . . ." I began, intending to protest the necessity of his providing us with refreshment. However, Sherlock Holmes nudged me sharply in the ribs, warning me to keep silent.

The boy had taken on a sulky expression, looking from one to the other of us until a sly grin curled his lip. "Wot'll ya do for me, if I fetch yer suds?" he asked mischievously.

"Now, Ollie . . ." began the constable.

The boy shook his head, standing in front of the other in a cocky pose, hands on his hips as his lithe little body twisted this way and that. "Right now," he insisted. "Kiss it, right now!" He moved a trifle closer to Rance and continued to flaunt his genitals a bare few inches

The constable blushed red, and glanced at Holmes and me in obvious consternation. He started to lean forward, as if to comply with the young man's wishes, but the boy stepped back a pace. "On your knees," he demanded.

Again, the big comfort, finally drop sided and pressed his "Tell it yer love "I loves you," " At that, the you ering up his clothes erly accountred and I constable placed a Oliver departed. "Sorry about "but the circumsta not . . . " "I understand before he returns what happened." "Well, you ! for several month covered the fact, where a pair 'a speak, for a shor and those as were they passes the w one is there. But 'Olmes, seein' as 'a chaps ter go. moments withou "But on th pants of the hor sively long time "Yes, and this bloke lear "A rather asked Holmes "Why . Surprise was "Well, I coul

Again, the big man hesitated in embarrassed discomfort, finally dropping to his knees as the youth insisted and pressed his lips to the semi-tumescent member.

"Tell it yer love it," hissed the lad.

"I loves you," whispered the constable.

At that, the youngster danced away and started gathering up his clothes. A few moments later he was properly accoutred and he held out his hand to his lover. The constable placed a coin in the outstretched palm, and Oliver departed.

"Sorry about that, Mr. 'Olmes," said John Rance, "but the circumstances were such that I'd rather Oliver

not . . ."

"I understand perfectly," said my companion. "Now. before he returns suppose you enlighten us as to exactly

what happened."

"Well, you know, these 'ouses 'as all been vacant for several months, and as the cabbies seems to 'ave discovered the fact, they is occasionally used for a quiet spot where a pair 'a gentlemen can . . . be alone, so ter speak, for a short stretch 'a time. I knows this, naturally, and those as were friends 'a mine—the cabbies, I mean they passes the word and I don't always know just which one is there. But, I think it's quite a proper thing, Mr. 'Olmes, seein' as 'ow they ain't that many places for a pair 'a chaps ter go. So I allows these blokes ter spend a few moments without interruption."

"But on this particular evening, you felt the occupants of the house in question were there a rather exces-

sively long time?" Holmes suggested.

"Yes, and I goes to look into it, when I stumbles on this bloke leaning against the fence rail 'a number 3. . . . "

"A rather tall, youngish man with ruddy features?" asked Holmes.

"Why . . . er . . . yes, sir," replied the constable. Surprise was evident in both his tone and expression. "Well, I could see the chap was more than a little drunk,

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which is not unusual that time 'a night, but I also sees he's . . . well, willing, if yer know what I mean."

"Go on," urged my companion.

"Ah, not that 'e wouldn't understand, mind you," said the constable slowly, "but I'd rather Inspector Greg. son not . . ."

"It's all right, John, go ahead," said Holmes softly. "Well, the long and the short of it is I goes into the shadows beside the 'ouse next door, and this chap follows me. And without a 'by your leave' he drops on his knees and starts unfastening me trousers. Well, Ollie and me, we've been proper married for the better part of a vear. I 'esitates, don't you know, before . . . "

"Before you let him take you," Holmes finished for

him.

"Yes, sir," the constable admitted. "'E unbuttons me fly, and takes out me cock, which I must admit was already more than a little stiff. Runnin' the tip of 'is tongue about the inside of me foreskin 'e quickly makes me poppin' hot, and causes me cock jump up so it's standin' like a bloody flagpole—and I'm not so small as all that, as yer may recall, Mr. 'Olmes . . ."

"No, indeed you're not!" my companion assured

him.

"Well, sir, 'e wraps 'is lips about me crown an' 'e does a right proper job, a-takin' all I got ter give 'im. 'E's kneelin' there in the mud, 'olding me 'ips in both 'is 'ands, pulling me back and . . ."

"Both his hands were on your hips?" asked Holmes pointedly. "He made no move to manipulate his own

member while . . . sucking yours?"

Constable Rance shook his head. "No, sir," he replied. "He only takes care 'a mine. Never once touches 'isself. 'E works 'is mouth 'ard against me groin, and kinda groans as 'e feels me roots begin ter tremble and me juice begin ter boil. Then I shoots me load down his gullet and 'e gulps it all like it were the nectar 'a the Gods. Then he gets to 'is feet 'an 'e staggers off down the lane, a singin' at the New-fangled Bann stand, but 'e mov word ter me." "And after th the dead man," H "Right!" rep At this poin tainer of beer, w to us. As if his pi questioning, Hol what additional and grounds. As mysterious cocks regarding his m length that he h going to get, my stable Rance for shoulder, Holme our waiting cab.

"The blund drove back to o such an incomp tage of it."

"It appears of it," I replied "Honestly, old bromide of "Perhaps I I replied in an o the man tallies mystery. But wh leaving it? That "The ring, it! If we have always bait ou Doctor-I'll lay

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lane, a-singin' at the pitch o' his lungs about Columbine's New-fangled Banner, or some such stuff. 'E could 'ardly stand, but 'e moves off down the street without another word ter me."

"And after that you went into the house, and found the dead man," Holmes suggested without emotion.

"Right!" replied the constable.

At this point, young Oliver returned with his container of beer, which he poured into steins and handed to us. As if his presence required no change in the line of questioning, Holmes continued asking the constable for what additional details he could give about the house and grounds. As these involved no further mention of the mysterious cocksucker, the youth remained none the wiser regarding his mate's momentary dalliance. Satisfied atlength that he had obtained all the information he was going to get, my companion stood up and thanked Constable Rance for his cooperation. Patting the boy on his shoulder, Holmes led me from the apartment and back to our waiting cab.

"The blundering fool!" Holmes said bitterly, as we drove back to our lodgings. "Just to think of his having such an incomparable bit of luck, and not taking advantage of it."

"It appears to me he took quite pointed advantage of it," I replied lightly.

"Honestly, Watson!" he countered sharply. "It's the

old bromide of business and pleasure."

"Perhaps I am still more in the dark than I realize," I replied in an offended tone. "It is true the description of the man tallies with your idea of the second party in this mystery. But why should he come back to the house after leaving it? That is not the way of criminals."

"The ring, man, the ring! He must have returned for it! If we have no other way of catching him, we can always bait our line with the ring. I shall have him, Doctor-I'll lay you two to one that I have him. . . . "

"My dear fellow," I said unable to restrain my

amusement at his determination and his choice of words, "from the evidence of the man's willingness to prostitute himself, I should not think that conquest would be overly difficult."

"Oh, Watson, you are incurably sexual!" replied Holmes, clapping his hand upon my thigh, and relaxing his features in response to his lightening mood. "No, I shall place an advertisement, and I shall have our murderer in handcuffs before many more hours have passed. But for now, let us concentrate on Norma Neruda and her glorious concert this evening. Her attack and bowing are splendid. What's that little thing of Chopin's she plays so magnificently: Tra-la-la-lira-lira-lay."

Leaning back in the cab, Holmes' fingers playing lightly about my crotch in time to his humming, I meditated upon the many-sidedness of this amateur bloodhound, and upon the human mind in general.

I thought, too, about Gregson and Lestrade, tried to picture the pair of them making love. So strange, this world of ours, so strange. . . . The duplicity of the human soul was never to be explained.

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THE ADVERTISEMENT AND THE LOVELY SERVING BOY

Our afternoon's exertions had been too much for my weak health, and I was tired when we returned to the flat. Holmes had to hurry, getting ready for the concert. I had decided not to go, and lay on the sofa watching his feverish activity. Once he was gone, I continued to lie there, allowing my mind to drift in that nebulous state between sleep and daydreaming, thinking about all I had seen and heard that day. I could not help floating back in my thoughts to Constable Rance and his attractive, demanding young mate, my imagination conjuring up a very extensive vision of their activities prior to our arrival.

In my mind's eye, I could see the powerful, muscular constable lying half-asleep with his mighty chest resting atop his slender companion. Perhaps one iron-hard thigh

might press upon the youthful legs, while the great arms encircled the other's torso. I had seen the substantial manhood which swung like a loose-jointed pendulum from the youngster's groin, and had enjoyed watching its expansion under John Rance's brief attentions. I won. dered how much larger it might become, and for that matter I pondered the extension which the bigger man might display himself. Judging by the width of his hands, I was sure it must be a truly formidable mast, and this had more or less been verified by his conversation with Holmes. This led to further speculations of the sort discussed between my friend and myself on the occasion of our first meeting, and I knew Holmes was even then attempting to gather statistics for a monograph on the comparative relationship between the size of a man's hands, feet, and penis.

I pressed myself back against the cushions, closing my eyes and allowing all these sweet visions to pass before my hooded orbs. I saw the magnificence of Rance's deeply defined body, and pictured him lifting that spoiled, lovely boy, carrying him to their bed and placing him gently on the rumpled sheet. Then he eased his own huge frame on top, allowing his fully risen cock to slip between the lad's thighs. Their lips met in the heat and moisture of exquisite passion, while their supple bodies writhed and twisted so their tight-joined contours completed a reciprocal filling, and fitted every convex curve to a recess of the other. The broad shoulders and narrow hips of the constable seemed to glow with the fire of his exertions as he turned the boy to face the mattress and eased the enormous shaft of his penis between the softly rounded cheeks. . . .

Then my visual construction shifted, and I was watching the powerfully built policeman as he stood in the shadows, offering his deep-veined projection to the eager lips of the kneeling murderer. Stupid as the man might be, the sheer beauty of his face and body made him the perfect subject for my mental wanderings. My

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mind's conjecture dwelt upon the vision of muscular, lunging possession and the strangled, desperate face of the criminal who knelt as a supplicant before him. Slowly, then, I sank into the depths of sleep.

Holmes awakened me when he returned, rousing me gently and guiding me to our bed. Half asleep, I felt him pull the coverings from my body, finally easing my nude form between the sheets. He took my heavy, sleep-laden penis in his mouth, holding it, savouring its slowly responding mass until I grew hard and rigid, finally blasting a fiery load of semen down his throat, before I once again slipped into heavy slumber.

During the night, I came awake several times, my senses responding to the monotonous monotone of Holmes' scraping at his violin. Though capable of almost virtuostic exposition, my companion was wont to sit in the nude, holding the fiddle across his groin when deep in thought, drawing the bow to produce a peculiar, disjointed series of harmonics. That these protracted periods of seeming melancholia were at least partially the result of his unsupervised experimentations with drugs was a fact I had yet to discover. Finally, my friend ceased his idle scraping and came to bed. My last conscious thought was when I felt the warmth of his body slide gently against me. I turned to face him, while our arms moved to draw us more tightly together. Then, knowing he was safe beside me, I slept soundly until morning.

Holmes was up ahead of me, and when I came out of the bedchamber our breakfast was already awaiting me on

the table. "How was the concert?" I asked.

"It was magnificent," he said, as he took his seat. "The place was literally filled with the most attractive young men, all come to hear their favorite performer. She is quite the rage in certain circles, you know."

"I thought you went to hear the music," I remarked

"Oh, yes . . . yes, of course," said Holmes quickly. "But there is frequently a dual purpose in one's most

simply motivated behavior. The performance was superb! Do you remember what Darwin says about music? He claims that the power of producing and appreciating it existed among the human race long before the power of speech was arrived at. Perhaps that is why we are so sub. tly influenced by it. There are vague memories in our souls of those misty centuries when the world was in its childhood."

"That's rather a broad idea for this hour of the morning," I remarked.

"And the other too earthy. Well, well, my dear, you are becoming ever more difficult to please. But, one's ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Na. ture," he added. "What's the matter? You're not looking quite yourself. This Brixton Road affair has upset you?"

"To tell the truth, it has," I said, although my more immediate concern at that moment was a pique of hurt that Holmes had been more concerned with the young men at his concert than with the performance itself. I refused to let him see this, however, and continued the conversation in the calmest of mundane fashions. "I ought to be more case-hardened after my Afghan experiences. I saw my own comrades hacked to pieces at Maiwand without losing my nerve."

"I can understand. There is a mystery about this which stimulates the imagination; where there is no imagination there is no horror. Have you seen the morning paper?"

"No "

"It gives a fairly good account of the affair. But it does not mention the fact that when the man was found he wore only a pair of lady's frillies; nor does it say a word about the ring. It is just as well it does not."

"Why?"

"Look at this advertisement," he answered. "I had one sent to every paper." turdence, seems a si

He threw the sheet across to me and I glanced at the place indicated. It was the first announcement in the

"Found" column: gold wedding band, for White Hart Tavern and 221B, Baker Street, betw "Excuse my using) own, some of those dur want to meddle in the a "That's all right," one applies. I have no r "Oh, yes, you have will do very well. It is "And who do you ment?"

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"Found" column: "In Brixton Road," it ran, "a plain gold wedding band, found in the roadway between the White Hart Tavern and Holland Grove. Apply Dr. Watson, 221B, Baker Street, between eight and nine this morning." "Excuse my using your name," he said. "If I used my

own, some of those dunderheads would recognize it, and

want to meddle in the affair."

"That's all right," I answered. "But supposing any-

one applies. I have no ring."

"Oh, yes, you have," said he, handing me one. "This will do very well. It is almost a facsimile."

"And who do you expect will answer this advertisement?"

"Why, the man who knelt before Constable Rance in the cold and wet-our florid friend with the square toes. If he does not come himself, he will send an accomplice."

"Would he not consider it as too dangerous?"

"Not at all. If my view of the case is correct, and I have every reason to believe that it is, this man would rather risk anything than lose the ring. According to my notion he dropped it while straddling Drebber's body, and did not miss it at the time. After leaving the house he discovered his loss and hurried back, but found the police about to investigate the light he had thoughtlessly left burning on the mantle. He had to pretend to be drunk in order to allay suspicion, and then follow through with the acts already described by Rance—thus accomplishing a dual purpose, by the way."

"How's that?" I asked.

"In addition to easing the constable's suspicions and allowing himself time to escape, he later made it awkward for the officer to report his presence or offer a description of his appearance. Our man would have had every reason to expect the constable's complete silence on the matter of any pedestrian in the vicinity."

"Our murderer seems a strange mixture of competence and inefficiency," said I.

Holmes shrugged. "I should say more a man of alter-

nating emotion, with moments of calm reasoning inter. spersed with periods of hurried rashness. He was rash to return for the ring, but on later calm reflection he would certainly wonder if it might not have been lost elsewhere."

"And check the 'Found' column."

"And come round to collect his property," added Holmes.

"And then?" I asked.

"Oh, you can leave me to deal with him. Have you any arms?"

"I have my service revolver and a few cartridges."

"You had better clean it and load it. He will be a desperate man; and though I shall take him unawares. it is as well to be ready for anything."

I went to our bedroom and followed his advice. When I returned with the pistol, the table had been cleared, and Holmes was engaged in his favorite occupation of scraping upon his violin-dressed, this time.

"The plot thickens," he said, as I entered; "I have just had an answer to my American telegram. My view of the case is the correct one."

"And that is . . . ?" I asked eagerly.

"My fiddle would be the better for new strings," he remarked. "Put your pistol in your pocket. When the fellow comes, speak to him in an ordinary way. Leave the rest to me."

"It is eight o'clock now," I said, glancing at my watch.

"Yes, he will probably be here in a few minutes. Open the door slightly. That will do. Now," he added, reaching his hand under his belt and repositioning his genitals, "I think the more distractions we offer him, the more off-guard he's going to be."

I smiled at the tremendous bulge his exertions created, and followed suit by hiking my trousers well into my groin. "There, if that doesn't disconcert him," said Holmes, "nothing will!"

"Perhaps I should "I hardly think to companion dryly. 41 render him . . . Here As he spoke there lock Holmes rose softly tion of the door. We hall, and the sharp clic "Does Dr. Watso pitched voice. We cou door closed and some footfall was an uncerta prise passed over the tened. It came slowly feeble tap at the door.

"Come in," I crie At my summons whom we expected, a bled into the apartme the sudden blaze of l she stood blinking at 1 nervous, shaky finger: his face had assumed was all I could do to I

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"Perhaps I should sit here nude," I remarked. "I hardly think that will be necessary," replied my companion dryly. "I merely mean to distract him, not

render him . . . Here comes our man, I think." As he spoke there was a sharp ring at the bell. Sher-

lock Holmes rose softly and moved his chair in the direction of the door. We heard the bootboy pass along the hall, and the sharp click of the latch as he opened it.

"Does Dr. Watson live here?" asked a harsh, highpitched voice. We could not hear the boy's reply, but the door closed and someone began to ascend the stairs. The footfall was an uncertain and shuffling one. A look of surprise passed over the face of my companion as he listened. It came slowly along the passage, and there was a feeble tap at the door.

"Come in," I cried.

At my summons, instead of the man of violence whom we expected, a very old and wrinkled woman hobbled into the apartment. She appeared to be dazzled by the sudden blaze of light, and after dropping a curtsey, she stood blinking at us as she fumbled in her pocket with nervous, shaky fingers. I glanced at my companion, and his face had assumed such a disconsolate expression it was all I could do to keep my countenance.

The old crone drew out a newspaper, and pointed at our advertisement. "It's this as has brought me, good gentlemen," she said, dropping another curtsey, making an obvious effort to keep her bulbous eyes from straying towards the massive display about my companion's loins. "The gold wedding ring in the Brixton Road must belong to my girl Sally, as was married only this time twelvemonth, which her husband is steward aboard a Union boat, and what he'd say if he comes 'ome and found her without her ring is more than I can think, he being short enough at the best o' times, but more especially when he has the drink. If it please you, she went to the circus last night along the . . ." Holmer, "nothing wil

"Is that her ring?" I asked, holding the rather over. large band upon my palm.

"The Lord be thanked!" cried the old woman. "Sally

will be a glad woman this night. That's the ring."

"And what may be your address?" I inquired, taking up a pencil.

"13, Duncan Street, Houndsditch. A weary way from

here."

"The Brixton Road does not lie between any circus

and Houndsditch," said Sherlock Holmes sharply.

The old woman faced round and looked keenly at him from her little red-rimmed eyes. "The gentleman asked me for my address," she said. "Sally lives in lodgings, 3 Mayfield Place, Peckham."

"And your name . . . ?"

"My name is Sawyer . . . hers Dennis, which Tom Dennis married her . . . and a smart, clean lad, too, as long as he's at sea, and no steward in the company more thought of; but when on shore, what with the woman and what with liquor shops . . ."

"Here is your ring, Mrs. Sawyer," I interrupted, in obedience to a sign from my companion; "it clearly belongs to your daughter, and I am glad to be able to restore

it to the rightful owner."

With many mumbled blessings and protestations of gratitude the old crone packed it away in her pocket, and shuffled off down the stairs. Sherlock Holmes sprang to his feet the moment she was gone and rushed into our room He returned in a few seconds with ulster and cravat. "I" follow her," he said hurriedly. "She must be an accomplice,—either that, or mother to a monstrous-huge daugh ter. But I am certain she will lead me to our man. Wait for me." The hall door had hardly slammed behind our visitor before Holmes had descended the stair. Looking through the window I could see her walking feebly along the other side, while her pursuer dogged her some little distance behind. "Either the whole theory is incorrect,

I thought to myself, "of heart of the mystery." T ne to wait, for I would result of his adventure. It was close on noon a pot of tea and a mu night be getting hungr slood momentarily best few inches from my ha especially as the mater. outward from the increa my fingers to touch the surface with my nails. I asked.

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I thought to myself, "or else he will be led now to the heart of the mystery." There was no need for him to ask heart of the mystery. There was no need for him to ask me to wait, for I would never have left until I heard the result of his adventure.

It was close on noon when the bootboy came up with a pot of tea and a muffin. "Mrs. Hudson thought you might be getting hungry, sir," he said. A pretty lad, he stood momentarily beside my chair, his crotch a bare few inches from my hand. The invitation was obvious, especially as the material of his trousers began to swell outward from the increase of pressure behind it. I allowed my fingers to touch the cloth, tracing lightly across the surface with my nails. "Did Mrs. Hudson send this, too?" I asked.

"Only indirectly, sir," replied the boy.

Furtively, feeling suddenly guilty, I glanced out the window. There was no sign of Holmes. Briefly, I wondered what he would say or do if he came in to find me abed with this young man. As if reading my thoughts, the bootboy grinned. "I don't think he'd mind, sir. He's had me once or twice hisself."

I coughed self-consciously, but felt the familiar warmth gathering within my loins. Again, as if somehow aware of my unspoken desire, the young man started to disrobe. Shirt and waistcoat fluttered as one across the back of a chair, and a moment later his shiny black boots were standing beneath it. A tide of arousal travelled upward through my body, and I felt momentarily dizzy. Had I tried to stand I am sure I must have toppled. He paused, allowing me to view his naked chest, the velvet smoothness of his torso bathed in brilliant noontime sunlight. His hair, while dark, had a reddish underhue, and this was enhanced by the glare that streamed in upon us, filtered only slightly by our porous draperies. All along his arms and in the center of his chest, the dark, downy growth seemed to glow like the coals of a low-burning fire.

He looked at me quizzically, as if suddenly uncertain

and questioning my reaction to his brash assumption of consent. "Marvellous," I whispered, and my hand stroked the silky fur along his arm.

Both his hands slid across the leather circlet of his belt, meeting atop the buckle. His deeply tapered chest and the smooth-muscled torso flexed a little, as did the sharply defined sinews of his arms. Long, blunt fingers manipulated the fasteners, and moments later he drew his trousers down the strong, hairy outline of his thighs. Stepping out of these, he stood before me in just a pair of tattered drawers, clean white cotton against ruddy skin. The shaft of his sex was ill-concealed by the ragged, threadbare material, and pressed its straining extension along the inside of his supple upper leg.

By now, all negative and restraining emotions had left me. My own erection was threatening to rend the rugged tweed of my breeches. The boy edged closer to my chair and before I half realized what was happening I had taken the tip of his throbbing penis between my lips. A salty, pungent muskiness possessed my senses, so the pressure of his hands upon the back of my head was hardly necessary. I scooped the entire member deep within me, drawing hard upon it with a suction that started deep within my diaphragm. I heard him groan, starting to undulate his narrow hips, and my only conscious thoughts were a desire to strip my own clothes from my body and press the resultant nakedness against him.

Nor was it long before I translated the thought into action. Sliding from the chair, I went onto my knees before him—thinking as I did so that I was emulating Holmes' projected murderer. I cast the shirt and jacket from my upper body without releasing the hold upon his hard-risen flesh. I allowed my lips to depart the tip for only seconds while I raised my legs to slide the trousers off along with my boots and undersuit. He fell on me then, and we twisted together upon the floor, the boy manoeuvering himself about so he could fasten his mouth

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about my prick, while I resumed my own pumping absorption of his shaft. I do not mean to imply he was hugely endowed, but the form of his genitals was so perfect, their size mattered little to me, and the passion of his youthful body more than compensated for any lack of

In short order, I found myself lying on top of him, volume. driving my loins against his face, while drawing furiously upon his upright column. I could feel the fluids begin to surge and rise within the vesicles at the base of my cock and was trying to hold back the flow when the boy suddenly erupted within me. Spurting gushes of creamy semen flooded my mouth, and in the same second I let go the restraining grip upon my own. Glorious waves of heated bliss rushed through me. I felt the boiling discharge of molten seed pouring down my shaft, while I still savoured his within my mouth. The boy choked as it struck him, and I experienced a perverse pleasure as I felt him struggling to take full measure of what I had to give.

We lay on the floor without moving, our bodies struggling for renewed homeostasis. My eyes ranged, finally, from the graceful arc of the young man's softening penis to the sideboard and to the table beside the chair where I had been sitting. I noticed the book I was reading when the boy came in,-Henri Murger's Vie de Bohéme. Most appropriate, I thought . . . sex on the boards with a serving boy, had old Henri dared write such things.

The lad was just reaching down to retrieve his breeches, when we heard a sudden scuffling at the door and without so much as a tap to warn us, the portal was flung wide open. "So!" shrieked the piercing voice of our landlady. "So, Dr. Watson, this is how you while away the hours when your dear lover is elsewhere detained."

I stared at her in horror, my mouth hanging open in shock and embarrassment. She continued to stare at me coldly, hands planted against her ample hips. Then, as abruptly as she'd entered the room, her mood changed

and she emitted a cackling laugh that nearly rocked the books from their shelves. "I shall remember this, John Watson! Never fear, but I shall remember this!"

"I . . . I trust you will have the discretion not to mention the incident to Mr. Holmes," I muttered.

"No, not a word," she leered, coming forward to tweak my chin. "Not a word, dearie, not until the proper time, at least!" She winked hideously, and bounded to. wards the still-naked youth. "But as for you, my lad!" she shouted.

"Please, if you . . ."

"Never mind! Just gather up your things and come along!"

She gave the youngster just enough time to collect his scattered clothing, then clapped him firmly on the arse and propelled him towards the stairs. "Just our little secret, dearie," she added to me over her shoulder, and I could hear her chuckling rattle clear to the lower landing.

My tea was cold by then, but I was so unnerved I drank it anyway and finally managed to force a return of interest in my book. I had been reading close to an hour when I heard Holmes' latchkey in the lock, and felt my body tense with anticipation. I had been quite careful to remove all trace of my brief moments of pleasure, and because I expected my companion to launch into an immediate description of his adventures, I was a bit taken aback by his first comment upon entering the room.

"Ah, Watson," he said cheerfully; "I see you have had the serving boy. Quite an attractive lad, isn't he?"

With that, he set about filling his pipe, leaving me to stare at him in astonished perplexity. "How on earth . . . ?"

"Elementary," returned my companion, "but if I explain it to you, you will know what precautions to take next time round, and that would never do at all."

"Dear me," said I, "it seems I shall never have a secret from you," (1) and in also all and all and all a

"Not a guilty se Holmes in his usual, and stretched his lo holstered chair. Desp elongation that etche stimulated new stirr "Well, what hap He grinned she that instant that he and chagrin seemed the former suddenly hearty laugh. "I wou it for the world," he they would never le to laugh, because I

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be the same before

"Not a guilty secret, in any event, my dear," replied Holmes in his usual, offhand tone. He had lighted his pipe, and stretched his long legs before him in his large, upholstered chair. Despite my recent activities, the inevitable elongation that etched itself along the length of his thigh stimulated new stirrings within my groin and viscera. "Well, what happened?" I asked at length.

He grinned sheepishly in my direction, and I saw in that instant that he had been unsuccessful. Amusement and chagrin seemed to be struggling for the mastery, until the former suddenly carried the day, and he burst into a hearty laugh. "I wouldn't have the Scotland Yarders know it for the world," he cried. "I have chaffed them so much they would never let me hear the end of it. I can afford to laugh, because I know I shall be even with them in the long run."

"What is it then?" I asked.

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"Oh, I don't mind telling a story against myself. That creature had gone a little way when she suddenly began to limp and show every sign of being footsore. Presently she came to a halt, and hailed a four-wheeler which was passing. I managed to be close to her so as to hear the address, but I need not have been so anxious, for she sang it out loud enough to be heard at the other side of the street. 'Drive to 13, Duncan Street, Houndsditch,' she cried. This begins to look genuine, I thought, and having seen her safely inside, I perched myself behind. That's an art at which every detective should be an expert. Well, away we rattled, and never drew rein until we reached the street in question. I hopped off before we came to the door, and strolled down the street in an easy, lounging way. I saw the cab pull up. The driver jumped down, and I saw him open the door and stand expectantly. Nothing came out. When I reached him, he was groping about frantically in the empty cab, and giving vent to the finest assorted collection of oaths that ever I listened to. There was no sign or trace of his passenger, and I fear it will be the same before he gets his fare. On inquiring at Number 13 we found the house belonged to a respectable paperhanger, named Keswich, and no one of the name either Sawyer or Dennis had ever been heard of there."

"You don't mean to say," I cried in amazement, "that that tottering, feeble old woman was able to get out of the cab while it was in motion, without either you or the

driver seeing her?"

"Old woman be damned!" said Sherlock Holmes, sharply. "We were the old women to be so taken in. It must have been a young man, and an active one, too; be sides being an incomparable actor. The get-up was inimitable. He saw he was being followed, no doubt, and used this means of giving me the slip. It shows that the man we are after is not as lonely as I imagined he was, but has a friend who is willing to risk something for him,—a lover, perhaps. Now, Doctor, you are looking a bit done-in after your early afternoon's romp. I would suggest you take a nap."

I was certainly feeling very weary, so I obeyed his injunction. I left Holmes seated in front of the smouldering fire, and I soon heard the low melancholy wailings of his violin, and knew he was still pondering over the strange problem he had set himself to unravel. I dozed off, then, and only came awake when Mrs. Hudson brought our supper. I shuffled out in dressing gown and slippers, to find Holmes naked and quite unconscious in his chair. In some alarm, I started fumbling for his pulse until Mrs. Hudson cackled in a distorted semblance of laughter.

"Don't worry your pretty head about this one, dearie," she said. "He's been shooting the dreamy-stuff for a long while."

I looked upon my companion's calm, waxy features, and recognized the signs of morphine sleep. That such a brilliant mind should also be an addict seemed very strange, indeed, but in a man of so many diverse dichotomies I supposed this was cause for neither surprise nor alarm. Mrs. Hudson expressed her satisfaction in a toothy,

leering grin. She land she same destination the same destination the same destination drew my robe more comforter before she rection as I image when I drifted off

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"Sleep well!" She laughed again and closed the door.

I sat over the remains of my dinner for quite some time, until I heard the serving boy's footsteps as he pattered off to bed. Soon afterward, I noted the more stately tread of our "landlady" as she passed my door, bound for the same destination. Wondering if the young man was about to satisfy the desires of the former courtesan, I drew my robe more tightly about me, poked the fire to produce a modicum of heat, and covered Holmes with a comforter before slipping back into bed. I stroked my own erection as I imagined the handsome bootboy in Mrs. Hudson's embrace. I was still comfortably warm and hard when I drifted off to sleep.

THE URCHINS AND TOBIAS GREGSON

The papers next day were still full of the "Brixton Mystery", as they termed it. Each had its own account of the affair, and for the first time some mention was made of the peculiar circumstances and the victim's garb. There were, variously, references to the Grecian Mystique, the Legions of Caesar, the French Navy, the Darwinian theory, Anne of Austria, and the principles of Malthus. Most articles concluded with an admonishment to the government, and advocating a closer watch over foreigners in England.

The Standard commented upon the fact that lawless and immoral outrages of the sort usually occurred under a Liberal Administration. These arose from unsettling the minds of the masses, and the consequent weakening of our stout, British moral structure. Add to this the unhealthy influence of foreigners—especially Americans—

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and the very foundations of English morality were seen to crack. The article went on to bemoan the failure of the crack. The article went on to bemoan the failure of the crack. The article went on to bemoan the failure of the crack. The article went on to bemoan the failure of the crack. The article went on the subjects, and to contrast this laxity with English propriety—even under the loosest leadership. Such lish propriety—even under the loosest leadership. Such dreadful persons, it concluded, were rarely bred on the soil of nations wherein social norms were well-established.

The deceased was an American gentleman who had been residing for some weeks in the metropolis. He had stayed at the boarding-house of Madame Charpentier, in Torquay Terrace, Camberwell. He was accompanied in his travels by his private secretary, Mr. Joseph Stangerson. The two bade adieu to their landlady upon Tuesday, the 4th inst., and departed to Euston Station where their avowed intention was to catch the Liverpool Express. They were afterwards seen together upon the platform. Nothing more is known of them until Mr. Drebber's body was discovered in its most peculiar condition, in an empty house in the Brixton Road. This was many miles from Euston, so how he came there, or how he met his fate, were questions still involved in mystery. Nothing was known of the whereabouts of Stangerson. "We are glad to learn that Mr. Lestrade and Mr. Gregson, of Scotland Yard, are both engaged upon the case," concluded the article, "and it is confidently anticipated that these wellknown officers will speedily throw light upon the matter."

Sherlock Holmes and I read over these notices together at breakfast and they appeared to afford him considerable amusement.

"I told you that, whatever happened, Lestrade and Gregson would be sure to score," he remarked.

"That depends how it turns out."

"Oh, bless you, it doesn't matter in the least. If the man is caught, it will be on account of their exertions; if he escapes, it will be in spite of their efforts. It's heads I win, tails you lose. Whatever they do, they will have followers. Un sot trouve toujours un plus sot qui l'admire."

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"What on earth is this?" I cried, for at that moment there came the pattering of many steps in the hall and on the stairs, accompanied by the audible expressions of disgust upon the part of our landlady. "Get your bloody little bastards off my brand-clean stairs!" she shrieked. "Oh! Stop that! Don't you . . . dare! Eh! Mr. Holmes! Mr. Holmes!"

"It's the Baker Street division of the detective police force," said my companion with a smile. He rose and started towards the door. "Best I see what they've done to Mrs. Hudson this time round," he added. "Last month they dropped a rat down her—"

As he spoke, the door flew open and there rushed into the room half a dozen of the dirtiest, yet prettiest little teen-aged street Arabs that ever I clapped eyes on.

"What have you done to Mrs. Hudson?" asked Holmes gravely. He looked back and winked at me, as we could hear the landlady's howls still echoing along the stairwell.

"We only dropped a road-apple or two along the steps," said one.

"Right fresh from the 'orse's arse it was, too!" sniggered another.

"Well, enough of that! No more, you understand?" said Holmes.

The boys nodded and formed a straggly row.

"Tention!" cried Holmes, in a sharp tone, and the six dirty little scoundrels stood in a row like so many disreputable statuettes. "In future you shall send up Wiggins alone to report, and unless I specifically send for you, the rest must wait in the street." A smug grin appeared on the features of several boys when Holmes said this, but ignoring them he continued. "Have you found it, Wiggins?"

"No, sir, we hain't," said the largest and most attractive of the youths.

"I hardly expected you would. You must keep on until you do. Here are your wages." He handed each of

them a shilling. "No nearest boy across better report next tin He waved his h stairs like so many from Mrs. Hudson. lescent voices in the "There's more little buggers than remarked. "The me seals men's lips. T where and hear eve can frequently won Well, you can imag "From the snig "I would say you eyes and ears."

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them a shilling. "Now, off you go," he said, clapping the nearest boy across the buttocks, "and come back with a better report next time."

He waved his hand, and they scampered away downstairs like so many rats, bringing a fresh string of oaths from Mrs. Hudson. The next moment we heard their adolescent voices in the street.

"There's more work to be got out of one of those little buggers than from a dozen of the force," Holmes remarked. "The mere sight of an official-looking person seals men's lips. These youngsters, however, go everywhere and hear everything. They are sharp as needles and can frequently worm their way into situations where—Well, you can imagine that for yourself."

"From the sniggering responses just noted," I replied, "I would say you have made use of more than just their eyes and ears."

Holmes shrugged. "A man must take his pleasure when and where he finds it. Just now, I am utilizing their talents on the Brixton Road affair, as there is yet a point I wish to ascertain. It is merely a matter of time. Hullo? We are going to hear some news now with a vengeance! Here is Gregson coming down the road with a beatitude written upon every feature. Bound for us, I know. Yes, he is stopping. There he is!"

There was a violent peal of the bell, and in a few seconds the fair-haired detective came up the stairs, three steps at a time, and burst into our sitting-room.

"My dear fellow," he cried, hugging Holmes and kissing him effusively on the lips. He tried, then, to dance my friend around the room in his glee. "Congratulate me!" he cried. "I have made the whole thing as clear as day."

A shade of anxiety seemed to me to stray across my companion's face.

"Do you mean you are on the right track?" he asked.

"The right track! Why, ducky-duck, we have the man under lock and key!"

"And his name is?"

"Arthur Charpentier, sub-lieutenant in Her Majesty's Navy," cried Gregson pompously, playfully tweaking my companion's crotch and sprawling into a chair, one leg across the arm.

Holmes gave a sign of relief and relaxed into a smile, "Tell us all about it," he said. "We are anxious to know how you managed it. Will you have a cigar-some whiskey and water?"

"I don't mind if I do," the detective answered. "The tremendous exertions which I have gone through during the last day or two have worn me out. Not so much bodily exertion, you understand, as the strain upon the mind. You will appreciate that, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, for we are both brain-workers."

"You do me too much honor," said Holmes, gravely. "Let us hear how you arrived at this most gratifying result."

The detective puffed complacently at his cigar. Then suddenly he slapped his thigh in a paroxysm of amusement. "The fun of it is," he cried, "that fool Lestrade, who thinks himself so smart, has gone off upon the wrong track altogether. He is after the secretary Stangerson, who had no more to do with the crime than the babe unborn. I have no doubt he has caught him by this time."

The idea tickled Gregson so much he laughed until he choked.

"And how did you get your clue?" urged Holmes.

"Ah, I'll tell you all about it. Of course, Dr. Watson, this is strictly between ourselves. The first difficulty we had to contend with was the finding of this American's antecedents. Some people would have waited until their advertisements were answered, or until parties came for ward and volunteered information. That is not Tobias Gregson's way of going at work. You remember the knick ers of lavender lace, of course?"

"Of course," said Holmes. "They came from Lady Underwood and Hamm, 129, Camberwell Road."

Gregson looked qui noticed that," he said. "Ha!" cried Greg should never neglect "To a great min seem. Holmes, sententiously. "Well, I went to I if she had sold a pair o to a gentleman, most She looked over her b had sent the drawers t pentier's Boarding Esta I got his address."

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Gregson looked quite crestfallen. "I had no idea you noticed that," he said. "Have you been there?"

"No."

"Ha!" cried Gregson, in a relieved voice; "you should never neglect a chance, however small it may seem."

"To a great mind, nothing is little," remarked

Holmes, sententiously.

"Well, I went to Lady Underwood's and I asked her if she had sold a pair of drawers that size and description to a gentleman, most especially an American gentleman. She looked over her books, and came on it at once. She had sent the drawers to a Mr. Drebber, residing at Charpentier's Boarding Establishment, Torquay Terrace. Thus I got his address."

"Smart—very smart!" murmured Sherlock Holmes.
"I next called upon Madame Charpentier," continued the detective. "I found her very pale and distressed. Her younger son was in the room too—an uncommonly fine-looking boy he is. He was looking red about the eyes, and his lips trembled as I spoke to them. That didn't escape my notice. I began to smell a rat. You know the feeling, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, when you come upon the right scent—a kind of thrill in your nerves that seems to boil up from the bollicks—if you'll excuse my crudeness, Doctor—your testicles," he added with a chuckle. "Have you heard of the mysterious death of your late boarder Mr. Enoch J. Drebber, of Cleveland?" I asked.

"The mother nodded. She didn't seem able to get out a word. The son suddenly burst into tears. I felt more than ever that these people knew something of the matter.

"'At what o'clock did Mr. Drebber leave your house for the train?' I asked.

"'At eight o'clock,' she said, gulping in her throat to keep down her agitation. 'His secretary, Mr. Stangerson, said that there were two trains—one at 9:15 and one at 11. He was to catch the first.'

"'And was that the last which you saw of him?'

"A terrible change came over the woman's face as I asked the question. Her features turned perfectly livid. It was some seconds before she could get out the single word 'Yes'—and when it did come it was in a husky, unnatural

"There was silence for a moment, and then her son spoke in a clear, calm voice.

"'No good can ever come of falsehood, mother,' he said. 'Let us be frank with this gentleman. We did see Mr. Drebber again.'

"'God forgive you!' cried Madame Charpentier, throwing up her hands and sinking back in her chair. 'You have murdered your brother.'

"'Arthur would rather we spoke the truth,' the boy answered firmly.

"'You had best tell me all about it now,' I said. 'Half-confidences are worse than none. Besides, you do not know how much we know of it.'

"'On your head be it, Alec!' cried his mother; and then, turning to me, 'I will tell you all, sir. Do not imagine my agitation on behalf of my elder son arises from any fear lest he should have had a hand in this terrible affair. He is utterly innocent of it. My dread is, however, that in your eyes and in the eyes of others he may appear to be compromised. That, however, is surely impossible. His high character, his profession, his antecedents would all forbid it.'

"'Your best way is to make a clean breast of the fact,' I answered. 'Depend upon it, if your son is innocent he will be none the worse.'

"'Perhaps, Alec, you had better leave us together,' she said, and her son withdrew. 'Now, sir,' she continued, 'I had no intention of telling you all this, but since my poor boy has disclosed it I have no alternative. Having once decided to speak, I will tell you all without omitting any particular.'

"'It is your wisest course,' said I.

"Mr. Drebber has been with us nearly three weeks.

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He and his secretary, Mr. Stangerson, had been travelling on the Continent. I noticed a Copenhagen label upon each of their trunks, showing that had been their last stopping place. Stangerson was a quiet, reserved man, but his emplace. I am sorry to say, was far otherwise. He was coarse in his habits and brutish in his ways. The very night of his arrival he became very much the worse for drink, and, indeed, after twelve o'clock in the day he could hardly ever be said to be sober. His manners towards the boy-servants were disgustingly free and all too obvious. Worst of all, he speedily assumed the same attitude towards my youngest son, Alec, and spoke to him in such a way that the boy was too innocent to understand. On one occasion he actually seized the lad in his arms and embraced him-an outrage which caused his own secretary to reproach him for his unmanly conduct.'

"'But why did you stand all this?' I asked. 'I suppose you can get rid of your boarders when you wish.'

"Mrs. Charpentier blushed at my pertinent question. 'Would to God I had given him notice on the very day he came,' she said. 'But it was a sore temptation. They were paying a pound a day each-fourteen pounds a week, and this is the slack season. I am a widow, and my boy in the Navy has cost me much. I grudged to lose the money. I acted for the best. This last was too much, however, and I gave him notice to leave on account of it. That was the reason of his going.'

" 'Well?'

"'My heart grew light when I saw him drive away. My older son is on leave just now, but I did not tell him anything of all this, for his temper is violent, and he is passionately fond of his brother. When I closed the door behind them a load seemed to be lifted from my mind. Alas, my boys sleep together in the same bed when Arthur is home on leave, so Alec must have told him what had happened while they were alone. Thus, when less than an hour after his departure, Mr. Drebber returned, my eldest son was full aware of what had taken place.

"Mr. Drebber was much excited, and evidently the worse for drink. He forced his way into the room, where I was sitting with my younger boy, and made some incoherent remark about having missed his train. He then returned to Alec, and before my very face proposed that he should go with him. "Never mind the old girl, here, but come along with me. A fine lad your age should profit by a bit of buggery, and you shall live like a prince—or a princess, just as you prefer. . . ." He went on like this until my poor head fairly echoed with his unbelievable words, and poor Alec was so frightened he shrank away from him. But he caught the boy by the wrist, and before I could utter a protest, had pulled the lad's trousers down about his knees.

"I screamed, and just as the brute was about to commit the very act he had previously mentioned, my eldest son Arthur came into the room. What happened then, I do not know, for I left with Alec. I heard oaths and the confused sounds of a scuffle. There was a long period of silence, when rapid, slurping sounds penetrated the stillness, and I could hear Arthur mutter something about "taking a bit of his own medicine." Then the outer door burst open, and Mr. Drebber fled down the street, his clothes in terrible disarray. Arthur stood in the doorway laughing, with . . . well, with his own clothing not exactly . . . er . . . open, here and there.

""I don't think that fine fellow will trouble us again," he said. "I will just go after him and see that he goes off down the street!" The next morning we heard of

Mr. Drebber's mysterious death.'

"This statement came from Mrs. Charpentier's lips with many gasps and pauses. At times she spoke so low I could hardly catch the words. I made shorthand notes of all she said, however, so there should be no possibility of mistake."

"It's quite exciting," said Sherlock Holmes, with a yawn. "What happened next?"

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"Why, we arrested Arthur Charpentier," said Greg-

"And what, exactly, is your theory?" asked Holmes.
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"Well, my theory is that he followed Drebber as far
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"Well done!" said Holmes in an encouraging voice.
"Really, Gregson, you are getting along. We shall make

something of you yet."

"I flatter myself that I have managed it rather neatly," the detective answered proudly. "The young man volunteered a statement, in which he said that he'd hailed a cab, as Drebber had done the same. After following him for some time, it became apparent the villain would not return, so young Charpentier discharged his cabby and started walking home—to spare the additional expense, he claims."

"He was not seen by anyone?" asked Holmes.

"He claims on his way home he met an old shipmate, and took a long walk with him. On being asked where this old shipmate lived, he was at first unwilling to say. When it became apparent he was in serious difficulties, he finally tried to convince us he had spent the better part of the night in this other chap's bed."

"And did you attempt to verify the facts with the other man?"

"That we did, Mr. Holmes, but as the other denied it all until convinced only his testimony could save his friend, we did not place much credit upon his word. No, I think the whole case fits together uncommonly well. What amuses me is to think of Lestrade, who had started off upon the wrong scent. I am afraid he won't make much of it. Why, by Jove, here's the very man himself!"

It was indeed Lestrade, who had ascended the stairs while we were talking, and who now entered the room. The assurance and jauntiness which generally marked his demeanor and dress were, however, wanting. His face was disturbed and troubled, while his clothes were disarranged and untidy. He had evidently come with the intention of consulting with Sherlock Holmes, for on perceiving his colleague he appeared to be embarrassed and put out. He stood in the centre of the room, fumbling nervously with his hat against his crotch, and uncertain what to do. "This is a most extraordinary case," he said at last—"a most incomprehensible affair."

"Ah, you find it so, Mr. Lestrade!" cried Gregson, triumphantly. "I thought you would come to that conclusion. Have you managed to find the secretary, Mr. Joseph Stangerson?"

"The secretary, Mr. Joseph Stangerson," said Lestrade, gravely, "was murdered in Halliday's Private Hotel about six this morning, in an almost identical manner as his late master."

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A FRILLY RISE IN THE DARKNESS

The intelligence which Lestrade brought us was so momentous and so unexpected we were all three fairly dumbfounded. Gregson sprang out of his chair and upset the remainder of his whiskey. I stared in silence at Sherlock Holmes, whose lips were compressed and whose handsome brows were drawn down over his eyes.

"Stangerson, too!" he muttered. "The plot thickens."

"It was quite thick enough before," grumbled Lestrade, taking a chair. "I seem to have dropped into a sort of council of war."

"Are you—are you sure of this piece of intelligence?" stammered Gregson.

"I have just come from his room," said Lestrade. "I was the first to discover what had occurred."

"We have been hearing Gregson's view of the mat-

ter," Holmes observed. "Would you mind letting us know what you have seen and done?"

"I have no objection," Lestrade answered, seating himself and significantly pulling his trousers to prevent their binding between his legs. "I freely confess I was of the opinion that Stangerson was concerned in the death of Drebber, especially as I was convinced their involvement extended beyond a simple employer-employee rela. tionship. This fresh development has shown me I was completely mistaken. Full of the one idea—namely that they had been lovers and had come to the end of the trail. so to speak, in a moment of violence, I set myself to find out what had become of the secretary-so called. I reasoned that as they had apparently become separated in the station, it would be natural for Stangerson to put up somewhere in the vicinity for the night, and to hang about the station again next morning."

"They would be likely to agree on some meeting place beforehand," remarked Holmes.

"So it proved. I spent the whole of yesterday evening in making inquiries entirely without avail. This morning I began very early, and at eight o'clock I reached Halliday's Private Hotel. On my inquiry as to whether a Mr. Stangerson was living there, they at once answered me in the affirmative.

"'No doubt you are the gentleman whom he was expecting,' they said. 'He has been waiting for you for two

"'Where is he now?' I asked.

"'He is upstairs in bed. He wished to be called at nine.'

"'I will go up and see him at once,' I said.

"It seemed to me that my sudden appearance might shake his nerves and lead him to say something unguarded. The boots volunteered to show me the room; it was on the second floor, and there was a small corridor leading to it. The boots pointed out the door to me, and was about to go downstairs again when I saw something

that made me feel experience. From ribbon of blood, w and formed a litt side. I gave a cr nearly fainted wh the inside, but we in. The window window, all hudd He was quite dea limbs were rigid boots recognized who had engaged Stangerson. The left groin, which victim were held mitted to drain fr est part of the a across the bed, a upon the wall?"

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that made me feel sickish, in spite of my several years' experience. From under the door there curled a little red ribbon of blood, which had meandered across the passage and formed a little pool along the skirting at the other side. I gave a cry, which brought the boots back. He nearly fainted when he saw it. The door was locked on the inside, but we put our shoulders to it, and knocked it in. The window of the room was open, and beside the window, all huddled up, lay the naked body of a man. He was quite dead, and had been for some time, for his limbs were rigid and cold. When we turned him over, the boots recognized him at once as being the same gentleman who had engaged the room under the name of Joseph Stangerson. The cause of death was a deep stab in the left groin, which should not have proved fatal unless the victim were held immobile while his life's blood was permitted to drain from his body. And now comes the strangest part of the affair. What do you suppose was tossed across the bed, and what do you imagine was inscribed upon the wall?"

I felt a creeping of the flesh, and a presentiment of coming horror even before Sherlock Holmes answered. "The same, elongated figure of an erect penis was written in blood upon the wall, and a second pair of lacy drawers was tossed across the bed," he said.

"That was it!" said Lestrade, in an awestruck voice; and we were all silent for a while.

There was something so methodical and so incomprehensible about the deeds of this unknown assassin, that it imparted a fresh ghastliness to his crimes. My nerves, which were steady enough on the field of battle, tingled as I thought of it.

"The man was seen," continued Lestrade. "A milk boy, passing on his way to the dairy, happened to walk down the lane which leads from the mews at the back of the hotel. He noticed a ladder which usually lay there was raised against one of the windows on the second floor, and this was wide open. After passing, he looked back

and saw a man descend the ladder. He came down so quietly and openly the boy imagined him to be some carpenter or joiner at work in the hotel. He took no particular notice of him, beyond thinking it was early for the man to be at work. He has an impression that the man was tall, had a reddish face, and was dressed in a long, brownish coat. He must have stayed in the room some little time after the murder, for we found blood-stained water in the basin, where he had washed his hands, and marks on the sheets where he had deliberately wiped his knife."

I glanced at Holmes on hearing the description of the murderer which tallied so exactly with his own. There was, however, no trace of exultation or satisfaction upon his face.

"Did you find nothing in the room to furnish a clue to the murderer?" he asked.

"Nothing. Stangerson had Drebber's purse in his pocket, but it seems this was usual. He did all the paying. There was eighty-odd pounds in it, but nothing had been taken. Whatever the motives of these extraordinary crimes, robbery is certainly not one of them. There were no papers or memoranda in the murdered man's pocket, except a single telegram, dated from Cleveland about a month ago, and containing the words: 'Hope is in Europe.' There was no name appended to this message, so whoever their well-wisher may have been must remain anonymous. ..."

"The last link." cried Holmes, exultantly. "My case is complete."

The two detectives stared at him in amazement.

"I have now in my hands," my companion said confidently, "all the details, including the name of the murderer, and can visualize the crimes as if seeing them committed with my own eyes."

This last statement appeared to me to be so startling I could hardly believe he was in his sober senses. Yet, it seemed to me that the mists in my own mind were gradu-

ally clearing away ception of the tru "All this see "because you fai grasp the imports presented to you. that, and everythi nal supposition, it. It is a mistake The most commo ous, because it p which deductions been infinitely m the victim been s out any of those which have rende far from making it less so."

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ception of the truth.

"All this seems strange to you," continued Holmes,

"All this seems strange to you," to

"All this seems strange to you, continued Tromes, "because you failed at the beginning of the inquiry to grasp the importance of the single, real clue which was presented to you. I had the good fortune to seize upon that, and everything since has served to confirm my original supposition, and, indeed, was the logical sequence of it. It is a mistake to confound strangeness with mystery. The most commonplace crime is often the most mysterious, because it presents no new or special features from which deductions may be drawn. This murder would have been infinitely more difficult to unravel had the body of the victim been simply found lying in the roadway without any of those outré and sensational accompaniments which have rendered it remarkable. These strange details, far from making the case more difficult, have really made it less so."

Mr. Gregson, who had listened to this address with considerable impatience, could contain himself no longer. "Look here, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," he said, "we are all ready to acknowledge you are a smart man, and have your own methods of working. We want something more than mere theory and preaching now, though. It is a case of taking the man. I have made my case out, and it seems I was wrong. Young Charpentier could not have been engaged in this second affair. Lestrade went after his man, Stangerson, and it appears he was also wrong. You have thrown out hints here, and hints there, and seem to know more than we do, but the time has come when we feel we have a right to ask you straight out: 'How much do you know of this business?' Can you name the man who did it?"

"I cannot help feeling Gregson is right," remarked Lestrade. "We have both tried and failed. You have remarked more than once since I have been in the room, that you had all the evidence you require. Surely, you will not withhold it any longer."

"Any delay in arresting the assassin," I observed, "might give him time to perpetrate some fresh atrocity."

Thus pressed by us all, Holmes showed signs of ir. resolution. He continued to walk up and down the room with his head sunk on his chest and his brows drawn

down, as was his habit when lost in thought.

"There will be no more murders," he said at last, stopping abruptly and facing us. "You can put that consideration out of the question. You have asked me if I know the name of the assassin. I do. You now possess a piece of physical evidence to link that name with his victims. But the mere knowing of his name is a small thing, compared with the power of laying our hands upon him. This I expect very shortly to do. I have good hopes of managing it through my own arrangements. . . . "

He was interrupted by a tap at the door, and the spokesman of the street Arabs, young Wiggins, introduced his tattered, yet appealing person. "Please, sir," he said, touching his forelock, "I have the cab downstairs."

"Good boy," said Holmes, blandly. "Why don't you introduce this pattern at Scotland Yard?" he continued, taking a pair of steel handcuffs from a drawer. "See how beautifully the spring works. They fasten in an instant."

"The old pattern is good enough," remarked Lestrade, "if we can only find the man to put them on."

"Very good, very good," said Holmes, smiling. "The cabman may as well help me with my boxes. Just ask him

to step up, Wiggins."

I was surprised to find my companion speaking as though he were about to set out on a journey, since he had not said anything to me about it. There was a small portmanteau in the room, and this he pulled out and began to strap. He was busily engaged at it when the cabman entered the room.

"Just give me a help with this buckle, cabman," he said, kneeling over his task, and never turning his head.

The fellow came forward with a somewhat sullen, defiant air, and put down his hands to assist. At that in-

stant there was a a Sherlock Holmes sp "Gentlemen, introduce you to Enoch Drebber and a 1 observed fresh atrocity." and signs of it. down the room s brows drawn he said at last in put that conasked me if I now possess a ne with his vics a small thing, ands upon him. good hopes of ls. . . . " door, and the ins, introduced sir," he said, wnstairs." Why don't you abman an- M ais head At that is

stant there was a sharp click, the jangling of metal, and Sherlock Holmes sprang to his feet again.

"Gentlemen," he cried, with flashing eyes, "let me introduce you to Mr. Jefferson Hope, the murderer of Enoch Drebber and Joseph Stangerson."

PART II

THOSE WHO WERE HANGED, AND THOSE WHO WERE HUNG

In the central portion of the great North American Continent there lies an arid and repulsive desert, which for many a long year served as a barrier against the advance of civilization. Forming a saline oasis in the center of this vast, silent wilderness, is a Great Salt Lake. About the shores of this a community began to grow, springing from the seed of the original migrants who reached its shores in the year eighteen hundred and forty-seven. These people called themselves "The Saints", and were the followers of the Law of Moses as handed on the Golden Tablets to their patron leader, Joseph Smith.

Coming as a gentile into their midst, and swearing to support their laws in exchange for his physical salvation, was a gaunt, haggard man, whom the wagon train of Brigham Young had discovered beside the trail from

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On one point only did John Ferrier offend against the laws of the Chosen, and this was in the matter of his domestic arrangements. Whereas the custom of the Mormons required a man to protect and serve as many women as his household could support, this newcomer to their midst remained a bachelor; and in fact, employed only male servants about his house and farm. Thus, Lucius flowered into adolescence and young manhood, surrounded completely by those men who worked for his beloved foster father.

By the age of sixteen, young Lucius developed into such a specimen of physical beauty and perfection, he attracted the interest of many a wayfarer upon the high road which ran by Ferrier's farm. As year succeeded year he had grown taller and stronger, his cheek more ruddy and his step more elastic. The sight of this lovely boy revived many forgotten thoughts in Ferrier's mind, as he watched the lad's lithe, masculine figure gleaming in muscular splendour upon his plunging mustang, managing the powerful beast with all the ease and grace of a true child of the West.

It was not the father, however, who first discovered that the child had developed into a young man. It seldom is in such cases. That mysterious change is too subtle and too gradual to be measured by dates. Least of all does the youth himself know it until the tone of another's voice or the touch of a hand sets his heart thrilling within him. He learns, then, with a mixture of pride and fear, that a new and larger nature has awakened inside himself. In

the case of Lucius Ferrier the occasion was serious enough in itself, apart from its future influence upon his destiny and that of many besides.

It was a warm June morning, and the Latter Day Saints were as busy as the bees whose hive they have chosen for their emblem. In the fields and in the streets rose the same hum of human industry. Down the dusty high roads defiled long streams of heavily laden mules, all heading to the west. The gold fever had broken out in California, and the overland route lay through the city of the Elect. There, too, were droves of sheep and bullocks coming in from the outlying pasture lands, and trains of tired immigrants, men and horses equally weary of their interminable journey.

Through all this motley assemblage, threading his way with the skill of an accomplished rider, there galloped Lucius Ferrier, his fair face flushed with the exercise and his hat fallen back on its string to reveal his tousled, chestnut hair. He had a commission from his father in the city, and was dashing in as he had done many a time before, thinking only of his task and how it was to be performed. The travel-stained adventurers gazed after him in astonishment, and even the unemotional Indians, journeying in with their peltries, relaxed their accustomed stoicism as they marvelled at the beauty of the muscular pale-faced boy.

He had reached the outskirts of the city when he found the road blocked by a great drove of cattle, driven by a half-dozen wild-looking herdsmen from the plains. In his impatience he endeavoured to pass this obstacle by pushing his horse into what appeared to be a gap. Scarcely had he got fairly into it, however, before the beasts closed in behind him, and he found himself completely embed ded in the moving stream of fierce-eyed, long-horned bullocks. Accustomed as he was to deal with cattle, he was not alarmed at his situation, but took advantage of every opportunity to urge his horse on, in the hope of pushing his way through the cavalcade. Unfortunately, the horns

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of one of the creatures, either by accident or design, came of one of the or the flank of his mustang, and excited it to madness.

In an instant it reared up upon its hind legs with a snort of rage and pranced and tossed in a way that would have unseated any but a skillful rider. The situation was full of peril. Every plunge of the excited horse brought it against the horns again, and goaded it to fresh fury. It was all the boy could do to keep himself in the saddle. Choked by the rising cloud of dust and by the steam from the struggling creatures, he was in danger of losing his balance when a kindly voice at his elbow assured him of assistance. A sinewy brown arm caught the slender lad about the waist, drawing him off his frightened mount, and bearing him to safety upon the saddle-bow of his rescuer.

"You're not hurt, I hope." said his preserver in a tone of concern.

The boy looked up at the man's dark, fierce face and laughed uneasily. "It scared me a little bit," he admitted. "Whoever would have thought Poncho could be so scared by a lot of cows?"

"Thank God you kept your seat," the other said, earnestly. He was a tall, savage-looking young fellow, mounted on a powerful roan horse, and clad in the rough buckskins of a hunter. "I guess you're the son of John Ferrier," he remarked; "I saw you ride down from his house. When you see him, ask if he remembers the Jefferson Hopes of St. Louis. If he's the same Ferrier, my father and he were pretty thick."

"Hadn't you better come and ask him yourself?" asked the boy. His eyes had travelled the length of this stranger's lean, hard body, and within himself he felt a stirring of excitement like none he could remember. The man had ceased to touch him, and Lucius' foremost awareness was the desire to feel the strength of the other's arms about him.

The young fellow seemed pleased at Lucius' sugges-

tion, and his dark eyes sparkled with pleasure. "I'll do so," he said; "we've been in the mountains for two months, and are not exactly in visiting condition. I hope your father will take us as he finds us."

"I'm sure it'll make no difference," said the boy, "Besides, if those cows had jumped on me, my father

would never have got over it."

"Neither would I," said his companion.

"You! Well, I don't see that it would make much matter to you. You ain't even a friend of ours."

The young hunter's dark face grew so gloomy over this remark that Lucius Ferrier laughed aloud. "There, I didn't mean that," he said; "of course, you're a friend now. You must come and see us." With that, the boy remounted his mustang, and waving casually at his new. found friend, resumed his interrupted ride. But within his heart, the boy retained an awareness of some new. mysterious awakening. He glanced back at the handsome stranger, who had continued to watch his retreating back. "Hope he comes," whispered Lucius to his horse. "He's just gotta come by!"

Young Jefferson Hope rode on with his companions, gloomy and taciturn. He and they had been among the Nevada Mountains prospecting for silver, and were returning to Salt Lake City in the hope of raising capital enough to work some lodes they had discovered. He had been as keen as any of them upon the business until this sudden incident had drawn his thoughts into another channel. The sight of the handsome youth, as frank and wholesome as the Sierra breezes, had stirred his volcanic, untamed heart to its very depths. When the boy had vanished from his sight, he realized that a crisis had come into his life, and that neither silver speculations nor any other questions could ever be of such importance as this new and all-absorbing one. The love and desire which had sprung up in his heart and groin were not the sudden, changeable fancy of a boy, but rather the wild, fierce pas-

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He called on John Ferrier that night, and many times again, until his face was a familiar one at the farmhouse. John, cooped up in the valley, and absorbed in his work, had had little chance to learn the news of the outside world during the last twelve years. All this Jefferson Hope was able to tell him, and in a style which interested Lucius as well as his father. But the more meaningful moments for both young men came when John Ferrier was busy supervising his hands in the fields, and the pair of them were left to their own devices. Nor was their exchange such a secretive or hidden entity. What had passed between John Ferrier and the elder Jefferson Hope so many years before was being repeated by their respective sons. While Ferrier could not know this for sure, he hoped it might be the case, and made certain he caused the two young men as few interruptions and inconveniences as possible.

There was a mountain stream some distance from the farmhouse, and it was to a secluded glade beside this bubbling channel that Lucius was wont to lead his companion. There, in the cool shade of birch and aspen, the two young men stripped off their coverings and plunged naked into the water. Filtered sunlight glinted off their youthful, glorious bodies. Jefferson Hope, tanned to the waist from his many hours of labor in the western hills, stood tall and straight,—lean but powerfully built, with each element of his muscular body outlined against the skin. The horizontal ridges across his belly were divided in the center by a natural demarkation of his bilateral symmetry. Tiny tufts of auburn hair gleamed like burnished copper on his chest and forearms, while the patch about his groin seemed darker, almost black. And from

this dense, stygian jungle descended a full and powerful this dense, stygian , reminder of the rugged manhood contained within this marvellous physique.

The cock of Jefferson Hope was thick and corded like his upper arms and chest. Tiny veins twisted in gnarled, blue outline across its surface, seeming to pul. sate even in repose, and more especially when his flesh responded to the proximity of the boy. Then, its phenomenal length would increase, growing like some mythi. cal serpent. The bulbous, shiny head would poke forth from the heavy folds of foreskin, its single eye opening and expanding, as if responding to the brilliant sunlight beyond the overhang of foliage.

Lucius, younger and not as yet so fully developed. was nonetheless an exquisite counterpart to this massive display of manhood. Standing half a head less than his mentor, the boy's firm body was full and round, with a rosy promise of robust maturity just around the corner. His skin was a naturally lighter hue, but burnished to a gentle copper colour across its entire surface. At first, Jefferson Hope had questioned this, but Lucius quickly confessed his secret.

"I come here every chance I get," he said, "and I lie naked on that level rock above us. I always seem to respond quickly to the sun, so I am tanned from the very beginning of warm weather."

"I hope no one else discovers this," said Jefferson Hope. "I'd hate to think of you in some other man's arms

when I have to go away."

"Never fear," whispered the boy, standing closer to him. They had just emerged from the stream, and both their bodies were sprinkled with moisture, with here and there a tiny rivulet tracing its pattern across hard, taut

Lucius felt the heavy tip of the other's cock brush gently against his groin, and before either could form another word he had grasped the tall, lean woodsman by the arms, pulling their bodies tightly together. As their

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lips met, a full, sweet sensation coursed through both of them, and whatever doubts or hesitations might have them, and whatever doubts or hesitations might have limited the flowering of their love, these now seemed to limited the flowering about them. For Jefferson Hope, melt like winter snows about them. For Jefferson Hope, melt like winter snows about them for which he had it was as if he had found the treasure for which he had it was as if he had found the treasure for which he waken-searched all his life. For Lucius Ferrier, it was the wakening of manhood matured, containing within it all the exigencies of love and passion that nature had placed within his body.

Between them, two hard, powerful members pressed almost painfully for expression. The boy clung fiercely to the man, but wriggled his lower body until both their flaring cocks had sprung into fully erect positions, lying upward, now, compressed as dual walls of rigid, living flesh undulated against them.

"Have you ever . . . I mean, am I the first . . . ?" asked Jefferson Hope.

"The first and only," whispered the lad.

The tall frontiersman eased his companion down upon the cool, thick moss, and allowed the full, hard weight of his body to rest on top. Their mouths were locked again in total possession, while each closed his eyes to the uneven light and allowed his body to savour only its heated contact with the other's flesh. A surging love bound them ever more tightly together, until it transcended their physical expression in the depth and passion of its intensity.

Lucius felt the other's hardened mast pulsing impatiently against his belly, the expanded crown and solid cylinder like a heated, glowing iron upon his skin. Instinctively, and without awaiting instruction from his obviously more experienced partner, the boy eased the strong, heavy form upward, across his chest, until Jefferson Hope sat astride the youthful torso. Then Lucius took the cruel, demanding member in his hands and guided its great candy-apple tip against his lips. The pliant crown caressed him, depositing a tiny drop of moisture on his eager, willing tongue. Lucius savored it, tasted the sweet

saltiness of the fluid. This in turn acted as an aphrodisiac, stimulating his senses until he lunged upward, trying to draw the entire, throbbing bolt within himself.

Jefferson Hope looked down upon the young, hand. some features, contorted with their fantastic efforts. He responded with a mixture of amusement and sincere con. cern. Leaning his upper body forward, he balanced him. self on his hands to permit the youngster an easier access to his massive tool. Gently, he rocked his hips, causing the great cockhead to enter and withdraw without once jamming its furious strength against the delicate mem. branes of the young man's throat. For a time, this satisfied them both. But the contact was so arousing, neither could sustain the restraint indefinitely. Lucius wrapped his arms about the other's hips, forcing the man off balance just long enough for the tremendous prod to slide further into him, choking off his breath, but filling his body with such satisfaction he hardly noticed the discomfort. On the part of Jefferson Hope, the sudden absorption sent shivering waves of desire through his viscera, and without thinking of the possible negative consequences, he thrust his erection deeper into the gasping orifice. Lucius was close to strangling on it now, but he never slackened his efforts. Hope's cock slid upon the phlegm brought upward by its rough descent, resulting in an accelerated vigour on both their parts. The enormous probe drove fully into the boy, while the course black hairs of the man's groin ground upon the youngster's tender lips.

They remained in their posture of maximum penetration for several seconds, until the black swirl of passion receded, and Jefferson Hope hurriedly withdrew his sex. Half-unconscious, the boy looked up at him, blinking back tears that the great shaft had caused to stream from his eyes.

"Are you all right?" asked the frontiersman.
"Um, never better," sighed the boy. Again, the fingers of both his hands grasped the powerful member, and

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The glorious natural surroundings affected them both, and the nearby stand of pine trees created a wall that seemed to shield them from the rest of the world. It was their private domain, a piece of earth that belonged to just the two of them. As Jefferson Hope knelt above the slender youth he knew he had, at last, found the ultimate, missing element in his life. It was the necessary adjunct to transform his lonely frontiersman's existence into the full, rich relationship he had observed and envied in others—in those few truly happy people he had encountered during the course of his endless, restless wanderings. At length, he withdrew his rigid probe and leaned over the youth to plant a gentle kiss upon his lips.

Lucius responded with such a fiery passion that the frontiersman found it both surprising and gratifying. That this small, supple body could contain such physical power was enough to disorient his senses. That the boy might actually return his love was almost too much to be hoped. The young man's lips parted and his tongue darted along the rows of strong, white teeth. The sweet essence of his innocent, burgeoning maturity left no doubt in the

other's mind that his regard was fully reciprocated.

"I want you to love me," whispered the youth. "I do . . . with all my heart," replied the frontiersman.

"I know . . . I know you do," gasped Lucius, "but I meant . . . more. I want you to fill me with that love, to make me feel it to the very roots of my soul."

For a moment Jefferson Hope was confused by the young man's words, but gradually the full implication dawned upon him and the thought of such physical bliss

nearly overcame his senses. "I might injure you," he

replied.

"You could never injure me," the youth assured him. Gently, then, he dislodged the hold of the larger man and momentarily pulling himself free of his beloved's body, he turned upon his taut, flat belly. The warm, blushing contours of his buttocks brushed the deep distension of the other's swaying testicles and the open invitation was instantly communicated. There could no longer be any doubt of the young man's meaning, and Jefferson Hope bent to plant another kiss . . . this time upon the crevice that guarded his lover's secret pit. He allowed his tongue to trace the depression, eventually to probe the depths between twin mounds of hard, glowing flesh. He sensed the accumulated moisture, the passionate heat that rose from that abyss of waiting, virginal willingness. The gentle expectancy of the gleaming, downy surfaces made him feel almost guilty, brutal and boorish as he contemplated the act this boy had so openly encouraged. Yet the boiling desire within his loins emboldened him and drove him to accept the proffered expression of love.

Carefully, he laved the entrance, lubricating the passage and loosening the pressure of constricted muscle-ring until he had assured himself the way was adequately prepared. Only then did he ease his loins across the waiting, upturned membranes and place his huge, palpitating crown against the tender flesh. With a gentle, thrusting motion of his hips he centered the massive bolt, held it against the gates and permitted a brief initial penetration. He felt the sphincter draw tight against him and he sensed the responding spasms of pain that trembled through the

prone, waiting form beneath him.

Certain knowledge of the agony he must be causing this beloved boy restrained him, and Jefferson Hope lowered his chest upon the smooth plane of the young man's back. "I don't want to hurt you," he whispered.

"You're not," the youth assured him. "You're not,

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thing I have to give."

This further assurance of devotion encouraged the larger man. With a steady, driving pressure he slid the heavy bolt within the other's resisting circle of flesh. He heavy bolt within the other's resisting circle of flesh. He heavy bolt within the other's resisting circle of flesh. He heavy bolt within the other's resisting circle of flesh. He heavy bolt within himself strangely excited by the regular groans of exquisite, pleasurable agony. He felt the heat of the young exquisite, pleasurable agony. He felt the heat of the young exquisite, pleasurable agony within him he allowed his probe to sink deeply within the furnace of the youth's affection. Lucius' slender form grew tense and rigid within his lover's grasp, but between muted exclamations of wracking pain, the man could hear muttered words of encouragement. "Please, take me," rasped the boy. "Let me feel all of you inside me! Fill me with it; let me know your love . . . all your love . . ."

When at last the man's coarse, dark hairs pressed hard upon the softly rounded buttocks, he heard the whimpering cries of the youth dissolve and become only this series of throaty mutterings. The words of endearment and encouragement continued, while the full, searing enclosure threatened to draw the very essence of manhood from the being of Jefferson Hope. The lad had forced himself to endure the undoubted agony of the other's penetration, and he now lay still, receptive to what must follow. His words continued to reassure his companion, however, and it was clear that nothing was going to dissuade his purpose. The gradual relaxation of tonus proclaimed his body's agreement with these verbal expressions.

Slowly, Jefferson Hope began to grind his loins upon the small, rounded backside. His great imbedded member slid through the channel with ever-increasing speed and deeper penetration. A wave of thrilling warmth surged outward, heating his skin as it coursed through the body of the boy. Lucius must have felt the impaling thrusts to the very tips of each toe and finger. He tensed as its all-possessing might affected each organ and gland within his body. With repeated ecstatic sighs, he responded to the hammering drive of the larger man. Never had he known such unmitigated bliss, nor such a sense of total involvement with another human being. His own sex was a swollen mass of heightened, throbbing sensitivity, and through the passages of his brain he knew the drumming beat of love's persistent chant.

Jefferson Hope wrapped his arms more tightly about the youth, allowing his fingers to seize upon the small, rigid points of his nipples. He kneaded these, squeezed and pulled at them until he felt a responding twist, heard the added sigh of pleasure that emphasized the other's contented joy. The pounding loins and deeply imbedded mast formed a bridge between them, a connecting link through which these shared emotions passed, where love itself seemed embodied by the force of fleshy penetration.

The larger man lifted his chest and midsection, gazed down the narrow tunnel his position caused to form between their bodies. He saw the dark, gleaming form of his cock as it held in suspended motion. The tip and fully half its length lay buried in the youth, while the lighter flesh of his white-rose cheeks clamped tight about the dark red shaft. The man felt an undulating pressure from the youthful muscles that held him, the warning throb of his testicles as they foretold the impending termination of this sublime euphoria. He tried to restrain himself, to retard the ultimate and prolong its joy for a few extra seconds. "If you could only see it," he whispered to the youth. "If you could see this pole going into you!"

"I can feel it," gasped the boy. "I can feel the heat and the strength of it every time you ram it home...
every time. ..."

Jefferson Hope allowed his lower body to settle once again upon the boy, his pulsing manhood to glide through the searing channel. He groaned and released a heavy discharge of breath against the young man's ear. "So good," he mumbled. "Feels so good!"

"Love . . ." returned tender stripling.

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"Yes, love!" cried the man with a sudden ferocity. "Yes, damn me, love! I love you, Lucius, love you as I've never loved another living thing . . . never!" "You promise me, Jefferson . . . promise you'll love

me now and for always?" "Always," returned the man. He shuddered through the entire length of his powerful frame. This motion drove his loins ever harder against the luscious silken skin. His arms clamped tight about the smoothness of the other's torso as the tender youth lay enclosed within his grasp. Slowly, still attempting to prolong the moment's heightened physical and emotional content, he barely moved his midsection, let his extended member lie nearly still within its loving emplacement. He felt the young man stir beneath him. He knew the sudden upward pressure of buttocks bespoke the plea to deliver yet another modicum of possession.

"More," whispered the boy at length. "Please, Jefferson . . . let me feel it slide within me. Give me your seed. Let me hold this final bit of you inside me." Lucius mustered the strength to drive his thighs a trifle wider, allowed the man's great bolt to gain a fractional inch of space, moaned as the weight of his lover's sac descended deeper into the widened crevice. Testicles crushed against him as the man moved to fulfill his breathy command.

With the swelling lust of approaching climax, Jefferson Hope propelled his shaft in long, deep strokes. Through his brain there swirled the mingled joys and passions of a man newly acquainted with this most singular of emotions. Within his loins the song was echoed and his genitals became the herald of expressed affection. The youth's cradling warmth rocked and strove against his own, assuring the man that no pain remained to mar the bountiful ecstasy of their joining.

All his strength seemed to gather in his lower body. He felt the heat and constricting energies of approaching release. All sensation was concentrated within that part of him which lay inside the boy, and his only additional awareness was the pressure of chest and midsection brought to bear against the smooth hardness of the young ster's slender back. Jefferson Hope endured the boiling urgency he would have liked to restrain, almost wept from the combined ecstasy of impending discharge and the knowledge that this heightened bliss must mark its own termination. But physical sensation reaffirmed his love, and he held this thought to dominate all the rest as he projected his spurting seed.

Lucius seemed to feel it, to respond with equal passion as the frontiersman lunged frantically in the throes of euphoria. Their naked forms writhed and twisted more tightly together, until overwhelming emotion gradually subsided, permitting each to regain the sense of being apart yet with the other—and in a greater sense to become a single entity beneath the Divine beauty of open sky and towering pines. A gentle breeze seemed to whisper to them from the upper branches, filling each with the cer-

tain knowledge of nature's acceptance.

And so it was their relationship continued and developed. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, the two young men withdrew to their secluded glade beside the river and proclaimed their love by the intimate joining of their bodies. Lucius' skill soon grew to match his passion, until no possible act of erotic expression had been omitted from their repertory. The younger man had learned to absorb the monstrous shaft of his lover without the least discomfort, and the larger man had permitted the youth to explore his body in a similar manner. Only through true reciprocation, where either found himself free to use the other's body as his own, were they able to express fully the depths of their mutual regard.

So great became this affection that it was impossible to hide it from John Ferrier; nor, indeed, was there any reason that they should. Lucius' foster father had only the greatest respect and admiration for Jefferson Hope, especially as he recalled the moments of his own youth which he had spent in the arms of the young man's sire.

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One of his greatest regrets—and in fact the cause of his own semi-withdrawal from most of human society—had own semi-withdrawal from most of human society—had been the failure of this past relationship to reach fruition. The elder Hope had been unable to accept his more basic of the elder Hope had entered into an unhappy marriage, the drives and had entered into an unhappy marriage, the only fortunate product of which had been his son. By the time this fact became obvious, John Ferrier had departed and was beyond the elder Hope's reach or recall.

Now, observing the obvious love that existed between his child and the offspring of his own former paramour, John Ferrier felt a rekindling of his long-repressed sensibilities. He rejoiced with them in their bliss and anxiously awaited the moment when one or the other might confide his secret. Fear of the father's possible displeasure restrained Jefferson Hope, however. And Lucius was silent. too, most especially on the subject that disturbed him most deeply. Jefferson Hope had made some previous commitments, prior to their having met. It would be necessary for him to depart for a time and settle his business. He owned an interest in a mine that only now was beginning to show a profit, and his intention was to sell his shares, after which he would return to the valley. He and Lucius would then have the funds required to start their life together in some land beyond the domain of the Saints.

Thus the exquisite joy of the two lovers was disturbed by the pending separation. As the time of his friend's departure grew closer, however, Lucius finally felt the need to confide in his parent. Hesitantly, one afternoon when Jefferson Hope had returned to town in order to negotiate his membership in a wagon train that was soon to leave for the west, Lucius approached John Ferrier. After some preliminary hesitation he confessed what had passed between himself and his lover.

"I had suspected as much," replied the elder Ferrier, "and to say I am delighted would be to seriously understate my feelings."

At this, such a great joy sprang up in the young

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man's heart that he threw himself into his foster father's arms and kissed the weather-worn brow. Though sad. dened at the prospect of losing the company of this child he had come to think of as his own flesh and blood, John Ferrier could not help but respond to the other's undisguised happiness. "There is but one problem," he said at length. He held the youth away from him, clasping one firm shoulder in either hand. "You must impress upon your Jefferson how important it is that he return for you as soon as possible. I have already been approached by the elders of the Temple on the subject of your marriage, and while I should be able to delay any decision in this matter for a limited period, there will come a time. . . ."

Lucius' face blanched white, for the prospect of becoming herdsman to a flock of females so revolted his sensibilities it nearly made him ill. More horrible yet was the realization that this would also require his sleeping with them and satisfying their sexual cravings. "Oh, God, father," he moaned, "I doubt I could endure such a dreadful existence."

"My own feeling, exactly," replied the elder Ferrier, "but while I have been able to spare myself this disgusting duty, the law of the Chosen is most rigid. If you would have your Jefferson Hope instead of the allotted quota of bovine chattels, you must assure his rapid return."

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JOHN FERRIER AND THE PROPHET'S DISCIPLES

Three weeks had passed since Jefferson Hope and his comrades had departed from Salt Lake City. John Ferrier's heart was sore within him when he thought of the young man's return, and of the impending loss of his adopted child. Yet the youth's bright and happy face reconciled him to the arrangement more than any argument could have done. He had always determined, deep down in his heart, that nothing should ever induce him to allow his son to shoulder the burden of a Morman husband. Such marriage he regarded as no marirage at all, even for a man whose tastes ran to that sort of relationship. Having been assured of his foster-son's true inclinations, he was anticipating the return of Jefferson Hope with the same eagerness and anxiety as Lucius.

Yet, it was a dangerous matter—any deviation from

the laws of the Saints. A swift retribution fell upon any who dared follow the dictates of their own consciences, when these differed from the prescribed standards of behavior. The victims of persecution had now turned persecutors on their own account, and persecutors of the most terrible description. Not the Inquisition of Seville, not the German Vehmgericht, nor the secret societies of Italy, were ever able to put a more formidable machinery in motion than that which cast a cloud over the state of Utah.

Its invisibility, and the mystery which was attached to it, made this organization doubly terrible. It appeared to be omniscient and omnipotent, and yet was neither seen nor heard. How these diabolic watchdogs of the Prophet's Law had come to suspect the true situation between Jefferson Hope and Lucius Ferrier has never been clearly explained. Perhaps an incautious word had triggered the suspicion of some jealous mind, or possibly some servant in John Ferrier's employ had been placed upon the premises to act as spy for the Elders of the Temple. Regardless of the reason, it was only a few days after Jefferson Hope's departure that the minions of the Prophet began their harassment.

One fine morning John Ferrier was about to set out to his wheatfields, when he heard the click of the latch, and looking through the window saw a stout, sandy-haired, middle-aged man coming up the pathway. His heart leapt to his mouth, for this was none other than the great Brigham Young himself. Full of trepidation—for he knew that such a visit boded him no good—Ferrier ran to the door to greet the Mormon chief. The latter, however, received his salutations coldly, and followed him with a stern face into the sitting-room.

"Brother Ferrier," he said, taking a seat and eyeing the farmer keenly from under his light-coloured eyelashes, "the true believers have been good friends to you. We picked you up when you were starving in the desert, we shared our food with you, led you safe to the Chosen

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Valley, gave you a goodly share of land, and allowed you to wax rich under our protection. Is this not so?"

"It is 50," answered John Ferrier. "In return for all this we asked but one condition: that was, that you should embrace the true faith, and conform in every way to its usages. This you promised to do. and this, if common report says truly, you have neglected." "And how have I neglected it?" asked Ferrier, throw-

ing out his hands in expostulation. "Have I not given to the common fund? Have I not attended at the Temple? Have I not . . . ?"

"Where are your wives?" asked Young, looking around him. "Call them in, that I may greet them."

"It is true I have not married," Ferrier answered. "But women were few, and there were many who had better claim than I. I was not a lonely man; I had my son and several servants to attend my wants."

"It is of that son that I would speak to you," said the leader of the Mormons. "He has flowered into one of the handsomest youths in Utah, and has found favour in the eyes of many young women whose fathers are high in the land."

John Ferrier groaned internally.

"There are stories of him which I would fain disbelieve-stories that he has cavorted naked in the wilds, and given his body into the hands—not only of another male, but has permitted the use of his flesh by a gentile. This must be the gossip of idle tongues, I grant you, but I would be derelict in my duty as leader of the Chosen if I did not strongly urge some positive action to counteract such defamation."

Ferrier remained silent for some little time with his brows knitted. "You must give us time," he said at last. "My son is very young-scarce of an age to marry."

"Under the circumstances, it is imperative he take the necessary steps to repair his damaged reputation," said Young sternly. "He shall have one month within which to choose the first of his brides." The leader rose

from his seat and glared at John Ferrier with a dark, almost threatening demeanor. "At the end of thirty days he shall give his answer."

He was passing through the door, when he turned with flushed face and flashing eyes. "It were better for you, John Ferrier," he thundered, "that you and he were now lying blanched skeletons upon the Sierra Blanco, than that you should put your weak wills against the orders of the Holy Four!"

With a threatening gesture of his hand, he turned from the door, and Ferrier heard his heavy steps scrunch. ing along the shingly path.

He was sitting with his elbow upon his knee, considering how the problem was best to be solved, and wondering if there might be the slightest possibility of Jefferson Hope's return before it was necessary to inform Lucius of the Prophet's injunction. Of a sudden, a strong, sun-bronzed hand was laid upon his. Looking up, he saw his son was standing beside him. A single glance at his pale, frightened face showed that he had heard what had passed.

"I could not help it," he said, in answer to his father's look. "His voice rang through the house. Oh, father, what shall we do?"

"Don't scare yourself," he answered, drawing the youth to him and passing his broad, rough hand caressingly over his chestnut hair. "We'll fix it up somehow. There's a party starting for Nevada tomorrow, and I'll manage to send Jefferson a message, letting him know the hole we are in. If I know anything o' that young man, he'll be back with a speed that would whip electro-telegraphs."

Lucius, who to tell the truth had been on the verge of tears at the frightful prospect of consummating a marriage with any of the local families, blinked the moisture from his eyes and returned the pressure of his father's embrace.

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on on the verse amating a marad the moisture of his father. "When Jefferson comes, he will advise us for the "When Jefferson comes, he will advise us for the best," continued the elder Ferrier. "But it is for you more than for myself that I am frightened. One hears . . . one than for myself that I am frightened. One hears . . . one than for myself that I am frightened. One hears . . . one than for myself that I am frightened. One hears . . . one than for myself that I am frightened. One hears . . . one than for myself that I am frightened. One hears . . . one than for myself that I am frightened those who oppose the hears such dreadful stories about those who oppose the Prophet; something terrible always happens to them."

Prophet; something terrible always happens to them. "But we haven't opposed him yet," suggested Lucius.

"But we haven't opposed "We must still be wary," cautioned his father. "We have been given a month, but I suspect it will not be a time of peace for us. No, before our allotted period of grace has passed, I guess we had best shin out of Utah."

"Leave Utah!"

"That's about the size of it."

"But the farm?"

"We will raise as much as we can in money, and let the rest go. To tell the truth, Lucius, it isn't the first time I have thought of doing it. I don't care about knuckling under to any man, as these folks do to their damned Prophet. I'm a free-born American, and it's all new to me. Guess I'm too old to learn. If he comes browsing about this farm again he might chance to run up against a charge of buckshot travelling in the opposite direction."

"But they won't let us leave," his son objected.

"Wait till Jefferson comes, my boy, and don't give way to fear. There's nothing to be afeared about, and there's no danger at all."

John Ferrier uttered these consoling remarks in a very confident tone, but the boy could not help observing that he paid unusual care to the fastening of the doors that night, and that he carefully cleaned and loaded the rusty old shot-gun which hung upon the wall of his bedroom.

On the morning which followed his interview with the Mormon Prophet, John Ferrier went into Salt Lake City, and having found his acquaintance, who was bound for the Nevada Mountains, he entrusted him with his message to Jefferson Hope. In it he told the young man of the imminent danger threatening him, and how necessary it was that he should return. Having done thus he felt easier in his mind, and returned home with a lighter heart.

As he approached his farm, he was surprised to see a horse hitched to each of the posts of the gate. He recognized the one as belonging to young Joseph Stangerson, and the other to be the favorite mount of the Elder Drebber's son Enoch. With building apprehension, John Ferrier hurried into the house. He called for Lucius, but received no answer. A quick search of the premises revealed the building empty, but the disorder of the sitting room—an overturned chair and a vase smashed on the floor—made the pulse of fear begin to sound at his temples. Rushing through the back door, he glanced quickly toward his wheat fields, where his hired hands were busily employed some distance from the house. The door to the barn stood open, and it was toward this darkened may that John Ferrier turned his hurried tread.

As he approached the door he was startled to hear a muffled groan, followed by a sob of agonized misery. Suppressing the fear and growing rage that struggled to overcome his natural inclination to caution, Ferrier crept to the door and peered through the crack. Where the rays of sunlight fell across the earthen floor, John Ferrier beheld so horrible a sight, it was all he could do to keep from crying out in anguish. Lucius, his most precious son, was kneeling in the dust and grime, naked except for a shred of shirt sleeve about one arm and a tightly knotted kerchief around his neck. His posture placed him side ways to the elder Ferrier. Thus, by his desperate motions, as he looked from one to the other of his antagonists, Lucius alternately revealed the marks of a lash across both his back and the forward portions of his body. Several cuts and gashes burned an angry red, and the fury of his struggles were further evidenced by the numerous streaks of filth across his normally clean and glowing skin.

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The hulking youths stood to either side of their victim, both dressed in jeans and boots. Enoch Drebber, the more powerfully built of the pair, was stripped to the waist and held a coil of bullwhip in his hands. The other, Stangerson, was posed defiantly before the kneeling captive, thumbs hooked into his wide black belt, staring down at the monstrous genitals displayed through the open front of his trousers. He had extracted the entire mass of these, leaving his long, distended sac to flop in full-fleshed weight against the inner surfaces of blue-clad thighs. His penis, a singularly broad, evil-looking weapon, stood like a flaring lance above the dark-curled mass protruding through the separation of cloth at his groin.

"Now, show me how you performed your abomination upon the gentile," he said in a threatening tone. He advanced a step toward the supplicating figure of his victim, lips curled into lines of cruelty, crouching to bring his swollen projection directly level with the young man's lips.

"Never!" cried Lucius Ferrier. "I have sworn to be true to just one man, and my lips shall never . . ." His protestations were cut short as the heavy coil of braided leather crashed against his back. The force of Drebber's blow nearly toppled him, and without the use of his arms it was all he could do to keep from falling upon the straw and offal.

"Your lips will go where I tell them to go, and do what I tell them to do!" shouted Stangerson. With this, he seized the bound and helpless youth, grasping with both hands the victim's nape, and forced Lucius' face hard against his loins.

"Take it as you did the gentile's!" sounded the harsh voice of Enoch Drebber. "Take the cob of a true believer and let its blessing wipe out your former contamination!" Both of them laughed at this blasphemy, and Drebber stepped behind the naked youth to assist his companion in forcing Lucius' lips to part.

The sight of these two fiends subjecting his tender, beloved child to such gross and painful mistreatment completely outraged the sensibilities of John Ferrier. He had neglected to take up his shotgun as he raced through the house, and he thought for a moment to go back and fetch it. If he had, the outcome might have been far different. As it was, his fury so blinded him that no logical restraint remained. His wide, gnarled hand grasped the edge of the door and with a single motion he wrenched it open. Sunlight burst into the dim interior, illuminating the scene of evil violence. The act of exposing their depravity to the pure light of Heaven seemed to intensify the horror and to emphasize the difference between the innocence of the kneeling youth and the vile aspect of his tormentors.

With an anguished cry, John Ferrier threw himself against Enoch Drebber's back, the force of his onslaught carrying both men to the floor. In these first moments, the advantage of surprise was on the side of the farmer, who pummelled the burly youth and might have beaten him soundly had his companion not recovered his senses and rushed into the fray. Between the two of them, they were eventually able to seize John Ferrier's arms and force him onto his back. Despite his years, the old man continued to offer such violent, anger-crazed resistance, it was all they could do to hold him.

During the course of this conflict, young Lucius had managed to stumble to his feet. With his hands so tightly bound, there was nothing he could do but remain on the sideline, a helpless spectator to his foster parent's attack and eventual defeat. John Ferrier saw his son through the rain of blows now falling upon his face and body, and in the father's mind no concern was greater than the welfare of his child.

"Run, Lucius!" he shouted. "Get out of here. Get the hired men to help you!"

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mand again. The desperation in his father's voice put mand again. The desperation in his father's voice put wings to the young man's feet. "I'll get help!" called wings "I'll get the men to help us!" With that, he bolted Lucius. "I'll get the men to help us!" With that, he bolted through the door.

Neither Stangerson nor Drebber dared let go of their Neither Stangerson nor Drebber dared let go of their writhing, kicking victim. It took the strength of both to restrain him, and together they eventually managed to bludgeon John Ferrier into a state of dazed and bleeding submission. Only then were they able to drag his still-protesting body to an upright beam beside the door, where they bound him securely in a half-sitting position.

By now, the cries of the frightened, naked youth had summoned the workers from the fields. All four of these hired hands were pounding toward the barn, with Lucius running just ahead of them. "Best we get out of here while the gettin's good!" said Drebber between his labored gasps.

"No need," said Stangerson, smiling grimly. "No need." This vile, perverted instigator of the assault assumed a wide-legged stance in the doorway of the barn. His bloated genitals still swayed ponderously from his open jeans, flaccid now after his exertions. But he made no move to cover himself, seeming to take a degree of pride from his obscene display of sexual prowess.

Seeing the two men standing in the opening, beside the bound, barely conscious figure of his parent, Lucius slowed his pace until the hired hands caught up with him. All four of these were strapping, powerful young men, with muscles hardened from their daily labours, bare chests darkened by the Utah sun. With the four men whom he presumed to be his allies close behind him, Lucius advanced more boldly toward his antagonists.

"You'll git, if you know what's good for you," he shouted at the pair of interlopers. He stopped a few feet distant, breathing hard from his running, his naked flesh aglow and covered with a fine layer of sweat. This made the smears of grime form tiny streaks of black, running

down his chest and across his belly, gathering at his groin to fall like drops of inky semen from the tip of his swinging penis.

But his words had evoked no more than a knowing grin upon the lips of Joseph Stangerson. Now, as the farm hands continued to approach him, already slowed by their obvious apprehension, Stangerson raised his arm with the palm held in a flat vertical position. It was the universal command to stop; and even before he spoke, the advancing men exhibited a further fearful uncertainty. Both these trespassers were well known, of course, and the power wielded by their respective sires was not to be lightly discounted.

"Hold!" cried Stangerson, at length. "Would you lay hands on either Enoch Drebber or myself? Know you the penalty for displeasing the servants of the Holy Four?"

The men had stopped completely, now, and Lucius turned towards them in desperation. "My father!" he pleaded. "Help him! Think how kindly he has treated you, how honestly he has dealt with you . . . all of you!" The terrible realization began to dawn upon the youth, however. With his own hands still securely lashed behind his back, surrounded by sworn enemies on the one side and the wavering loyalty of his own servitors on the other, he was already at the brink of despair.

"Your Master has offended against the laws of the Prophet," continued Stangerson, speaking directly to the hired men. "What we visit upon him is his just and proper punishment. That he has chosen to physically resist us only compounds his crime and assures us of his greater guilt."

"What would you have us do?" asked one of the men. "This one," said Enoch Drebber, pointing a long thick finger at the cringing form of Lucius Ferrier. "This one has grossly violated the sacred laws, and in this he was encouraged and abetted by his father. What vile and unholy things may have passed between them we know not. But we are prepared to sacrifice ourselves to bring

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"No!" came the weak and wavering voice of John Ferrier. "You must not heed this evil man! He seeks only his own pleasure and cloaks his wickedness in the . . ."

The farmer's words were cut short by a brutal kick from Enoch Drebber's boot. The powerful bully was pulling back his foot for a second blow, when Lucius sprang at him, clinging with his teeth, like a terrier attacking a grizzly bear, kicking and biting the larger man.

"Seize him!" shouted Stangerson, and after a few moment's hesitation, two of John Ferrier's hired hands rushed forward to obey.

Lucius Ferrier was roughly thrown to his belly upon the straw- and offal-littered floor. Still following the instructions of Stangerson and Drebber, the four farmhands secured Lucius' feet to a pair of posts. Once his lower body was tightly restricted, they released his hands and retied them to another pair of upright posts, leaving the helpless youth spread-eagled across the filth and grime.

"Now," said Stangerson, "we can proceed with our punishment and purification." At this, he grinned openly at the others, leaving no doubt in the mind of any that his intentions were motivated purely by his own fiercely burning desires.

As his son was now subjected to assault and humiliation by six different men, John Ferrier could do no more than watch and offer an occasional prayer to Heaven that this outrage be avenged. Though his jaw had been fractured by its contact with Drebber's boot, the old man managed to curse the acts of depraved brutality. Each time he spoke, however, he only evoked a fresh roar of laughter from Stangerson and Drebber. Under the direction of these two fiends, young Lucius was subjected to the very acts over which the pair of Saints had claimed to be so incensed.

All six men had stripped their clothing, retaining only boots to protect their feet from the spikes of straw and other muck that lay scattered about the floor. That Lucius had been cast flat on top of these seemed of no concern to any of them. Enoch Drebber had produced a flask of whiskey from his saddlebag—another act at absolute variance with the standards of Mormon behavior—and as a result of the liquor's being consumed by all of them, their actions became increasingly gross and abusive.

While one powerfully muscled young man knelt in front of Lucius' face, holding the head tipped back and forcing his crimson shaft between the victim's lips, another lay with his groin atop the firmly rounded backside and proceeded to drive his swollen cock between the downy cheeks. Lucius was totally discommoded by this painful assault, and gagged by the girth of driving penis in his mouth and throat. He was powerless to utter a protest. Only by his violent twisting and the trembling of his body could his unwillingness be discerned, but these motions were completely ignored by the others.

Drebber and Stangerson stood to either side as the burly hired men plunged their rigid staffs deep within the supple flesh of the tender, helpless child. Occasionally, a muffled groan escaped him, quickly choked off as the man who knelt between his outstretched arms would lunge against him, driving his heavy bolt completely past the hals and forcing Lucius to gasp and retch in his efforts to breathe. The unmistakable evidences of pain and misery continued to wrack his small, muscular body. Tears were

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streaming down his face, while dust and grit adhered to the layer of the l by the guttural, bestial groans of satisfaction as his assailby the guidants abused his flesh. The man whose monstrous cock was lodged between the youngster's buttocks now pulled it almost free, braced his grimy hands against the solid, rounded cheeks and gazed down the channel between their bodies. His own massive chest and hard-ridged belly hovered darkly above the even, copper glow of the boy. The deeper hue of his shiny, beet-red column rose like a driven stake from the hidden depths. The man grunted with pleasure and satisfaction. Long had he watched the flowering of this gentle beauty, and while he might never otherwise have attempted to satisfy his cravings, he felt an exquisite pleasure as the ring of muscle gripped about his shaft. He lowered his loins, felt the delicious heat rise higher about him. Never had he known such total physical bliss. He rammed his probe still deeper and ground the wiry bristles of his groin upon the youngster's heated flesh, savoured the thrill of ultimate possession.

Lucius was beyond knowing the full range of his mistreatment. The fear and shock to which his mind had been subjected had numbed him; now frightful pain descended to surround his brain and further obliterate his sensory awareness. Doubly impaled, he was close to being strangled by the one—vaguely realized his body was being rent asunder by the other. Far, far in the distant recesses of fading perception, he heard the angry protests of his foster.

foster parent's strident voice.

"Let him go!" shouted John Ferrier. "Do what you will with me, but let the boy alone. He is but a child . . . an innocent, blameless child!"

"But so much more tender than an old bull," laughed one of his tormentors.

"In truth, one can almost enjoy enforcing the Prophet's will!" This last came in taut, strained tones from the man who drove his shaft deep within the youngster's

anus. The fellow's face was already contorted by approaching climax, and his lips curled cruelly back from his jagged, yellow teeth. As the strength began to gather in his loins, he sank more fully upon the young man's back, covering the patches of grime and the angry red striations with his own hirsute, sweat-drenched form. He felt the throbbing warmth about his cock, the pressure of his own weight driving his testicles between his thighs and the boy's. Even the discoloured, velvet-covered flesh on Lucius' back and arse seemed to welcome him, to cast up a glow of warmth to engulf him.

The first fellow had stiffened to a rigid kneeling posture. His swollen prick now trembled with the first flood of creamy essence that flowed in spurting leaps to cascade across the victim's tortured membranes. Lucius gagged and tried to swallow; but the massive cock had lodged deep within his throat, swelling and contracting as it disgorged its fluid, shutting off the air to his lungs until a tide of blackness rose about him. For several moments, then, a merciful swoon bore Lucius Ferrier beyond awareness of the terrible abuse to which his flesh was put. Not until the invading member had completely emptied itself and been withdrawn did the young man groan and his eyelids flutter open. By then, the next assailant was in position and the man who rode his backside was gasping in the throes of ultimate ecstasy.

As this searing discharge rocketed into his very bowels, another massive penis was placed against his lips. This time, however, the bulky organ was still in a semi-flaccid state. "Make it hard," growled the man. "Suck it in and and are limited."

in and make it hard."

Lucius rolled his eyes upward, gazing helplessly into the face of this former friend and employee. The fellow was as strong and robust as the rest, but his name was Elias and he had always seemed extremely gentle—almost protective in his attitude toward John Ferrier's son. "Elias," the boy managed in a hoarse whisper. "Will you do this to me, too?" Tears were running freely down the

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young man's cheeks, occasioned now as much by emo-

wracked his body. The fellow seemed to pause a moment, thinking. Then he glanced about as if in fear his hesitancy might be taken as a sign of unwillingess or disparagement of the Prophet's rightful retribution. Lucius could not see what passed between Elias and the two representatives of the Holy Four. He knew only that the heavy length of flesh continued to press against his lips, and that two hands now gripped his jaw to force it open. The heated softness lay within him a moment later, and the driving motion of Elias' hips soon forced his cock to slide along the channel where his predecessor's discharge had made the passage slick and open to receive him. Almost immediately. the erectile membranes began to swell. The monstrous bolt grew rigid while internal fires seemed to radiate through its satin sheath.

Lucius' eyes were buried in the coarse field of twisted pubic hairs, and his nostrils sensed the animal odors of sweat and musky, unwashed groin. He felt the pressure of work-roughened hands upon his ears and the sides of his face. Then he ceased to be aware of his abuse at all, for the man who pumped against the smoothly rounded arse withdrew his probe with a sudden, wrenching twist that sent flurries of pain sparking through the victim's body. Hardly had this antagonist lifted free than the next slid firmly into the saddle of the young man's buttocks. Lucius struggled once again against his bonds, pulling at the ropes with failing strength as he felt a fresh surge of agony begin to press itself against him. This was the fourth of the men who had followed him from the fields, another ally-turned-abuser, who strove to drive his flat, wide cockhead through the constricted opening.

When that fearsome shaft had finally entered him, and the full spectrum of pain-filled sensations began to register in his brain, Lucius would have screamed in agony. But the other invading probe had lengthened until

it grazed his hals and any vocal ejaculation was far be. yound his capability. Thus the only means of responding to his wretchedness was by the fearful trembling of his limbs and torso, or by the inner ragings of his tumbled thoughts. Why? he asked himself. Why are these men turning against me? Why are they defiling my body as if they'd never known me or spoken to me as friends?

But these considerations were short-lived. As pain increased with the violence of the assault upon his backside, the driving column within his throat began to grant him the only escape remaining—the dark oblivion of unconsciousness . . . and beyond this, the ultimate peace of death, itself.

As John Ferrier watched his beloved boy grow limp and his body cease to tense or otherwise struggle against his bindings, he felt a sudden sickening in his heart and mind. With the intuition of a parent, he knew the waves of blackness that now engulfed the youth were more than merely transitory lapses of sensibility. Like a madman, he bucked and strained against the ropes that held him, but he was powerless to free himself. He shrieked and called down further defamations upon the heads of these cruel and wicked men. But none of this availed him more than a fiendish chuckle from Stangerson and Drebber, and a grunt of animal pleasure from one of the human beasts who so mercilessly plunged their tools within the supple, dying flesh.

It was several moments before Enoch Drebber or Joseph Stangerson realized how abruptly their quarry had escaped them. Both had waited until the last in the expectation of subjecting the beautiful, supine youth to their ultimate degradation. After this they had meant to release him and depart, assured in their own minds that neither son nor father would ever dare speak against them. Neither had anticipated the actual, final outcome of their depravity; nor were they prepared to accept it when they began to comprehend what had happened.

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The other assailant, unaware of Lucius' demise until that moment, also withdrew his probe with a gasp of fearful surprise. Drebber and Stangerson hastily began grabbing up their clothes, shoving legs into their trousers without pausing to remove their boots. And all the while, the dreadful curses of the father rained down upon them all, adding an air of demonic fury to the unreality of the scene.

JEFFERSON HOPE AND THE WRATH OF VENGEANCE

He had come to the entrance of John Ferrier's farm, up to the very door where darkness lay like an infinite shroud. No sound save the wind through the nearby aspens and the rattle of a torn shutter answered his calls. They must, he reflected, be awaiting him anxiously, hidden in the shadows and afraid to betray their presence lest he prove to be an enemy. It was nigh on six days since his departure, and Jefferson Hope had returned at a gallop, almost killing his mount in the desperate attempt to return before some catastrophe befell Lucius and his father. That the silence was ominous, and the house obviously deserted, were facts his mind refused to accept. The Ferriers were somewhere about, awaiting his return. It could not be any other way.

He tried the door and found it open. As the heavy

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panel creaked back on its hinges and the unlighted inpanel creaked in terior lay before him, he experienced the first real tinge terior lay berote as he would against it, his mind was beof fear. Struggle as he would against it, his mind was beof tear. Survey was beginning to mull the dreadful possibilities. A bride might have been selected for Lucius before the stated deadline, and the boy could have refused her. Both he and his father might now be in prison beneath the temple. Or worse, the lad could have been forced to marry one or more of the Prophet's choice heifers and might now be lying abed with his arms about . . .

The thought so sickened Jefferson Hope that he forced it from his mind. The alternative was too gross ... too horrible to dwell upon. He hurried through the house, poking his head into every room, calling with greater determination and ever mounting fear as he went. But there was no honeyed voice to answer him, only the wailing currents of air and an occasional howl of coyotes or wolves in the distance. He exited through the rear, and even before he reached the scene of carnage his heart had risen to his throat and the blood pulsed in rivers of ice through his veins. The door of the barn stood open, sagging on a broken hinge as it swung slowly back and forth, clattering in the wind each time it was driven against the weathered wall. Behind it loomed the great maw of darkness, and at the base of this he saw the crumpled patch of something light. Dashing forward, he fell to his knees beside the poor, unhappy remains of his beloved. The tender skin was bleached from the sun, the slender body swollen and distorted by death and exposure to the elements.

Tears of grief were flowing from the frontiersman's eyes before the full realization could penetrate his beleaguered mind. He had not noted the gaunt, twisted figure still bound to the post just inside the doorway. John Ferrier groaned, and at first Hope mistook the sound for the creaking of a hinge. But when the guttural moan reached his ears a second time he sprang catlike to his feet, crouched to defend himself from whatever horror

might lurk in the darkness. Then he saw the form against the post and rushed to the farmer's side. One heavy coil of rope still restrained the elder Ferrier. Wrapped about his waist, it was secured beyond reach of his hands on the backside of the wood. Jefferson Hope slipped his knife beneath the cruel bond and severed it with a single stroke. The old man slumped forward, and for a moment the frontiersman feared he, too, had expired.

The younger man bolted to his feet, and was about to fetch some water from the nearby well, when John Ferrier groaned again and whispered weakly. "No," he

gasped. "No time! Hear me . . . hear. . . ."

The frail voice had faded off and Jefferson Hope dropped onto his knees, pressing his ear near the mouth of the dying man. "Who did this to you?" he demanded.

"Tell me what happened!"

"Stangerson . . . Joseph Stangerson . . . Enoch Drebber . . . our own four men . . . punishment for . . ." Again his rasping words failed and Ferrier lay with his eyes closed, drawing breath in heavy, rattling inhalations. Hope cradled the old man's head in his arms, willing the life back into him, crooning almost, as a mother might comfort her child.

At length, the old man's eyes fluttered open and he gazed in bewildered uncertainty at his would-be rescuer, not able to recognize him in his hazy confusion. "Jefferson," he muttered finally. "Leave," he whispered. "Give Lucius and me a decent burial and say a Christian prayer above our graves. Then go! They . . . they will punish you, as well . . . tried to save . . . saw Lucius had . . . had died. . . . " The blinking eyes tried to form tears, but the dehydrated body had little moisture left. Instead he merely emitted a choking sob and in broken tones explained to Jefferson Hope what had happened, finished by telling him that the fiendish practitioners had been greatly frightened by Lucius' death and would surely murder anyone who threatened to expose their infamy. "Go," he sighed again. "Don't try to avenge us. Go, Jefferson, and

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feeble beating of his heart decreased to nothing. For a long while, Hope remained on his knees, swaying slightly from side to side as he continued to support the dead man's shoulders against his knee, tenderly holdthe dead in his arms. Finally, he stood, took ing the lifeless head in his arms. Finally, he stood, took ing the distance and dug two graves beneath the aspens that grew behind the house. Gently, he placed the body of his beloved and that of the fine old man who had fathered him into their places of final rest. When the earth had been replaced he stood above them, head bowed in prayer, commending their souls to the Highest, and repeating all he could remember of the Christian prayers he had learned as a child.

He could hardly bear to leave the spot; but finally, as dawn began to break across the eastern ridges, he turned away and walked with weary tread to the post where his horse stood tethered. He stroked the faithful animal's neck and cast himself onto the saddle, rode away toward the rising sun. In these moments, Jefferson Hope had no idea what he would do or where he would go. His mind was so overcome with grief it was incapable of any greater plan. At length he reached the glade by the river where he and Lucius had shared their love; here he dropped from the saddle and threw his body upon the ground. He wept until he fell asleep. His only conscious thought was the certainty of his beloved's fate, and his own powerlessness to reverse what had happened. He wished that he, too, were lying with the old farmer and the tender youth in their last, silent resting place.

He slept all through the daylight hours, the sleep of exhaustion and despair. When the cool shadows of evening fell across him, however, he stirred. His active spirit shook off its lethargy, and despite the final admonitions of the dying man, he knew there was nothing else left to him but to devote his life to revenge. With indomitable patience and perseverance, Jefferson Hope possessed also

a power of sustained vindictiveness, which he may have learned from the Indians amongst whom he had lived. Absently, he kindled a fire to cook his meagre rations, and as he stood by its desolate flames, he felt that the only thing which could assuage his grief would be thorough and complete retribution, brought by his own hand upon his enemies. His strong will and untiring energy should, he determined, be devoted to that one end. With a grim white face, he bundled his few possessions and went to replace these in his saddlebags. As if Fate had purposely withheld its ultimate blow till then, his sturdy mount stag. gered beneath the extra weight. Then, with a desperate toss of its head it attempted to retain its balance, But after another moment, the noble animal fell to its knees. cast a final gaze upon its master and rolled onto its side in death

For five days, Jefferson Hope toiled footsore and weary through the defiles that bordered the Mormon settlements. At night he flung himself down among the rocks and snatched a few hours of sleep; but before daybreak he was always on his way. He knew he had been seen by the sentinels when he entered the valley, and he knew the minions of the Prophet would be seeking him. But fear could become his weapon as well as theirs. Stangerson and Drebber were bullies, and he knew there could be no greater coward than that. His immediate problem was to locate the four hired men who had so cruelly turned on their former employers. One by one, he would destroy them. By the manner of their deaths he would implant such terror in the hearts of the primary villains that long before their own moments came to meet the Angel of Vengeance, they would live in a state of constant and mortal dread.

The first of the brutes he sought was living on the farm of a man named Cowper, whose lands lay near the outer fringe of cultivation. By day, Jefferson Hope lay in the bushes that bordered the farmlands, watching the man as he laboured in the field of corn. When darkness

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fell that night, the gaunt, haggard frontiersman crept stealthily to the small room at the back of the house where his quarry lay sleeping. Holding the point of his blade his quarry lay workman's throat, Jefferson Hope shook against the burly workman's throat, Jefferson Hope shook him awake and commanded him to lie flat upon his stomhim awake and commanded, and when his shaking hands ach. When the man complied, and when his shaking hands were joined and pressed together in the small of his back, were joined and pressed together the tightly and afterward the gaunt frontiersman lashed them tightly and afterward forced the man to walk before him into the woods.

There, he bound his quaking victim to a tree. The hired man had been sleeping in just his combinations, which Jefferson Hope cut deftly away with his blade. Hardly a word had passed between them, because of Hope's original command to silence. Knowing some frightful fate awaited him, the fellow's fear lent weight to the spoken injunction. Now, as he stood bound and naked against the trunk, he stared in horror at the fiendish apparition which glared at him from the shadows. Hope's beard had grown out and his hair was tangled about his head like a mat of dried weeds. His eyes were sunken into his face and seemed to glow with an inner madness.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked the hired man.
Until that moment, the other had not been certain.
But the truth now dawned upon his sluggish brain and he nodded. "You are Jefferson Hope," he said.

"And you know why you're here?"

The prisoner let his head sag forward, and his voice became a muttered rasp. "Yes," he answered miserably. His own shame at what he had done and now his fear of the retribution standing so close at hand had all but paralyzed his vocal membranes. Until he felt the rough surface of the frontiersman's hand upon his naked flesh he did not look up . . . dared not gaze upon that frightful spectre. His skin leaped at the other's touch, and he would have pulled away had he not been firmly roped to the tree. One coil secured his neck, another his waist, while his feet were bound together and also lashed to the upright. The frontiersman now bent his captive forward, made

the bindings tighten at his throat and belly as he slipped the knife beneath the cords that held the wrists in place.

When the fellow felt his hands come free, he regarded his captor with surprise. "Why . . . what do you in. tend?" he asked. He rubbed his wrists, and for a moment the thought coursed through his mind that he might some. how free himself and overpower the obviously starved and weakened man who threatened him. But the knots secur. ing the other ropes were all beyond his reach; and while his hands were free to move, the rest of his body was pinioned so no possibility of escape remained.

"Take your prick in your hand," said Jefferson Hope,

"and pull your plum until I tell you to stop."

Dumbfounded by this singular request, the fellow stared at his captor until he demand was repeated, this time accompanied by the pressure of the other's knife against his throat. The bound, powerful body shuddered. One massive hand stole towards his groin to grasp the flaccid, fear-shrunken penis. He freed his bollicks, which adhered to the underside by the sweat of terror, and gradually his palm caressed the shaft into life. The great, redpurple knob began to fill. It drove apart the folds of foreskin and poked its bulky form free of the hooded enclosure. Despite his anxious fear, the sensations of lust began to seize the big man's frame, and he soon stood straining at his bonds as his flaring cock rode in fierce and proud erection. The heavy muscles of his powerful physique were tensed and in a state of flexed expansion. His palm moved faster along the massive bolt, squeezing the inner core so its hard-sprung mass pressed back in answer to him. The rapid pace caused his bloated sac to slap with fleshy cadence against his hairy thighs.

As Jefferson Hope stood silently watching this scene of queer depravity, he could not but admire the form of his captive. The fellow was young and not unattractive. His face was square and masculine, darkened by the sun so the skin was rough and weathered, giving him the aspect of a free and self-determined man. The great

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rounds of sinew that pressed their solid definition against taut-stretched hide were further evidence of this essential maleness, and for a moment the avenger felt such a spasm of remorse, his determination almost wavered. But his of removes, thoughts returned to the dreadful act of which this man had been a part, and Jefferson Hope remembered the tender youth with whom he had shared his love. The blood of anger swelled his brain again, and he urged his prisoner to greater effort.

The flailing hand beat harder, ever harder against the hirsute groin, and the swollen prick stood to ever more rigid attention. The captive's face grew flushed as his features contorted in response to the furious sensations that wracked his being. At length, he felt the seed begin to boil within him, and in the height of lust he pressed his head backward against the bark, gritted his teeth and

blasted forth his fluids.

It had been this signal which Jefferson Hope eagerly awaited. Bounding forward with the litheness of a springing puma, he seized the captive's sac and in a single thrust of his blade, he castrated the man and cast the pulsing orbs upon the ground.

So quickly had he moved, it was several seconds before the man-who was no longer a man-could comprehend what had befallen him. By then, his captor had stepped away, standing back in the shadows to watch the dawning of horrible reality across the other's features. Slowly, the prisoner's eyes grew wide with fright, and his mouth worked frantically as he tried to find some word to express the utter terror that gripped his soul. His one hand still clasped the now-useless organ, while his blood began to pour from the open wound.

The the full impact seized his brain, and the strength of his ebbing life possessed his throat. He screamed in pain and outrage, bellowed like a steer in a slaughterhouse, his mind too stunned to formulate coherent phrases. He merely shrieked in helpless, impotent terror.

"Tell them it was the Avenging Angel," said Jeffer-

son Hope with a malicious chuckle. "And tell them I'll never rest until each man has paid for his part of the crime." With this he slipped away into the shadowy blackness, leaving his victim to scream and plead with Heaven for compassion.

Because Hope had taken his victim no great distance from the farmhouse, the plaintive cries now awakened the farmer and his herd of bovine chattels. But because of the awesome aspect inherent in the sounds, none of them dared step outside the house. All knew of the Prophet's minions, and there was no reason to believe it could be other than this which caused the furor. Therefore, it was not until the light of day that the victim's fate was known to Cowper and his family, and it was only from the terminal gasps of the victim that the story was ever known.

The word spread like wildfire through the Mormon settlements. So great was the outrage of the Elders when they learned that their sons had perpetrated such a frightful act as they had with John Ferrier and his son, that Enoch Drebber and Joseph Stangerson were barely able to escape with their lives. Pursued now, not only by the wild-eyed frontiersman whom they had so greatly wronged, but by the forces of the Prophet as well, the two men fled to the East, where they attempted to lose themselves in the masses of humanity.

In the meanwhile, Jefferson Hope remained in the Valley of the Saints, always a single jump ahead of the constituted authorities. It was a month before he found his second quarry and dispatched him as he had the first. The third was more easily located, because he attempted to hide himself in the woods where he became easy prey to the stalking avenger. The fourth was Elias, the most culpable of the group because of his previous alliance and ultimate betrayal. By now, the truth had begun to be rumoured among the Saints. Whereas they had at first believed the sole blame lay with Stangerson and Drebber, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the hand of

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Fate would not have fallen so heavily upon the other hired hands if they had not also been guilty of more than lassitude in the demise of their former employers.

It was, therefore, necessary for Elias to flee the Mormon settlement as his mentors had before him. And it mon settlement as his mentors had before him. And it was on the road towards the west that Jefferson Hope was finally able to apprehend him and to subject his flesh to the same punishment as the others. After that, he set out on the cold trail of the primary miscreants. But Drebber and Stangerson had been careful to leave no evidence of their destination. Rumour reported that Drebber had managed to convert a large part of his property into money; and that he had departed a wealthy man, while his companion, Stangerson, was comparatively poor. There was no clue at all, however, as to their whereabouts.

Many a man, however vindictive, would have abandoned all thought of revenge in the face of such a difficulty; but Jefferson Hope never faltered for a moment. With the small competence he possessed, eked out by such employment as he could pick up, he travelled from town to town and through the United States in quest of his enemies. Year passed into year; his black hair turned grizzled, but still he wandered on, a human bloodhound, with his mind wholly set upon the one object to which he had devoted his life. At last his perseverance was rewarded. It was but a glance of a face in a window, but that one glance told him that Cleveland in Ohio possessed the men whom he pursued. He returned to his miserable lodgings with his plan of vengeance all arranged. It chanced, however, that Drebber, looking from his window, had recognized the vagrant in the street, and had read murder in his eyes. He hurried before a justice of the peace accompanied by Stangerson, who had become his private secretary, and represented to him that they were in danger of their lives from the jealousy and hatred of an old rival. That evening Jefferson Hope was taken into custody, and not being able to find sureties, was detained

for some weeks. When at last he was liberated it was only to find that Drebber's house was deserted, and that he and his secretary had departed for Europe.

Again, the avenger had been foiled, and again his concentrated hatred urged him to continue the pursuit. Funds were wanting, however, and for some time he had to return to work, saving every dollar for his approaching journey. At last, having collected enough to keep his life in him, he departed for Europe and tracked his enemies from city to city, working his way in any menial capacity, but never overtaking the fugitives. When he reached St. Petersburg, they had departed for Paris; and when he followed them there, he learned that they had just set off for Copenhagen. At the Danish capital he was again a few days late, for they had journeyed on to London, where he at last succeeded in running them to earth. As to what occurred there, we cannot do better than quote the old hunter's own account.

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A CONTINUATION FROM THE SECRET JOURNAL OF JOHN WATSON, M.D.

Our prisoner's furious resistance did not apparently indicate any ferocity in his disposition towards ourselves, for on finding himself powerless, he smiled in an affable manner, and expressed his hopes that he had not hurt any of us in the scuffle. "I guess you're going to take me to the police station," he remarked to Sherlock Holmes. "My cab's at the door. If you'll loose my legs I'll walk down

to it. I'm not so light to lift as I used to be."

Gregson and Lestrade exchanged glances, as if they thought this proposition rather a bold one; but Holmes at once took the prisoner at his word, and loosened the towel which we had bound around his ankles. He rose and stretched his legs, as though to assure himself that they were free once more. I remember that I thought to myself, as I eyed him, that I had seldom seen a more powerfully

built man; and his dark, sunburned face bore an expres. sion of determination and energy which was as formidable as his personal strength.

"If there's a vacant place for a chief of the police, I reckon you are the man for it," he said, gazing with undisguised admiration at my lover. His eyes dropped to the substantial mound about Sherlock Holmes' crotch and he seemed to smile inwardly, to himself. "The way you kept on my trail was a caution," he added, forcing his eves once again on his captor's face.

"You had better come with me," said Holmes to the two detectives.

"I can drive you," piped Lestrade, his effeminacy strongly displayed in this unguarded moment.

"Good! and Gregson can come inside with me. You too, Doctor. You have taken an interest in the case, and may as well stick with us." This latter comment to me was delivered with such a note of casualness it would surely have disarmed any who might suspect our relationship without being personally familiar with all the circumstances

Naturally, I assented gladly, and we all descended together. Our prisoner made no attempt at escape, but stepped calmly into the cab which had been his, and we followed him in. Lestrade mounted the box, whipped up the horse, and brought us in a very short time to our destination. We were ushered into a small chamber, where a police inspector noted down our prisoner's name and the names of the men with whose murders he had been charged. The official was a white-faced, unemotional man, who went through his duties in a dull, mechanical way. "The prisoner will be put before the magistrates in the course of the week," he said. "In the meantime, Mr. Jefferson Hope, have you anything that you wish to say? I must warn you that your words will be taken down, and may be used against you."

"I've got a good deal to say," our prisoner said slowly. "I want to tell you gentlemen all about it."

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"Hadn't you better reserve that for your trial?" asked

the inspector.

"I may never be tried," he answered. "You needn't "I may never be tried," he added. "It isn't suicide I'm thinking of. look startled," he added. "It isn't suicide I'm thinking of. Are you a doctor?" He turned his fierce dark eyes upon me as he asked this last question.

"Yes, I am," I answered.

"Then put your hand here," he said, with a smile,
motioning with his manacled wrists towards his chest.

I did so; and became at once conscious of an extraordinary throbbing and commotion which was going on inside. The walls of his chest seemed to thrill and quiver as a frail building would do inside when some powerful engine was at work. In the silence of the room I could hear a dull humming and buzzing noise which proceeded from the same source.

"Why," I cried, "you have an aortic aneurism!"

"That's what they call it," he said, placidly. "I went to a doctor last week about it, and he told me it is bound to burst before many days have passed. It has been getting worse for years. I got it from over-exposure and under-feeding among the Salt Lake Mountains. I've done my work now, and I don't care how soon I go, but I should like to leave some account of the business behind me. I don't want to be remembered as a common cutthroat."

(After some discussion among the police officials, it was decided to let the man tell his story, and it was the earlier portions of this account which I utilized to prepare the foregoing saga. I omit, here, only that portion already transcribed into a more appropriate chronology.)

"They were rich and I was poor," continued Jefferson Hope, referring to his quarry, "so it was no easy matter for me to follow them. When I got to London my pocket was about empty, and I found that I must turn my hand to something for my living. Driving and riding are as natural to me as walking, so I applied at a cab-owner's office, and while he was initially hesitant to hire a for-

eigner he eventually succumbed to the persuasion of . . ."
His hand settled in his crotch, where he stroked the for midable rise along his thigh. He said no more of the manner in which he had obtained his position, but the implication was not lost on any of us.

"The hardest job," he went on, "was to learn my way about, for I reckon that of all the mazes ever contrived, this city is the most confusing. I had a map beside me, though, and when once I had spotted the principal hotels and stations, I got on pretty well.

"It was some time before I found out where my two gentlemen were living; but I inquired until at last I dropped across them. They were at a boarding house at Camberwell, over on the other side of the river. When once I found them out, I knew that I had them at my mercy. I had grown my beard, and there was no chance of their recognizing me. I would dog them and follow them until I saw my opportunity. I was determined that they should not escape me again.

"They were very near doing it for all that. Go where they would about London, I was always at their heels. Sometimes I followed them on my cab, and sometimes on foot; but the former was the best, for then they could not get away from me. It was only early in the morning or late at night that I could earn anything, so that I began to get behindhand with my employer. I did not mind that, however, as long as I could lay my hand upon the men I wanted.

"They were very cunning, though. They must have thought there was some chance of their being followed, for they would never go out alone, and never after night-fall. During two weeks I drove behind them every day, and never once saw them separate except the couple of times Drebber went into that ladies' apparel shop. But even then, Stangerson hovered close about the door and would have created an awful commotion if I had tried to grab him. What puzzled me was Drebber's being in there at all, because I knew neither of them had trucked with

women for all the he was buying the finalize my plan. "I took to ha Terrace, the stree to the trouble they her younger son. Drebber got hims dition I was certa that would fright "At last, on when I saw a ca luggage was bro Stangerson follow horse and kept at ease, for I ki quarters and wor ing for. Instead however, they pu lowed them insitrain, and also h left and there wo gerson seemed rather pleased th the bustle I coul them. Drebber sa to do, and that i soon rejoin him vailed and I mad to be at the curb "The momen last come. I had they could protect mercy. I did not My plans were al vengeance unless that strikes him, It had come to

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Terrace, the street in which they boarded, and I tumbled
to the trouble they were causing their landlady because of
the trouble they were causing their landlady because of
the younger son. It was just a matter of waiting, because
her younger son himself drunk half the time, and in that conDrebber got himself drunk half the time, and in that condition I was certain he was going to make some advances
that would frighten the boy.

"At last, one evening I was driving up the street when I saw a cab pull up at their door. Presently some luggage was brought out and after a time Drebber and Stangerson followed it, and drove off. I whipped up my horse and kept within sight of them, feeling very much at ease, for I knew that they were going to shift their quarters and would likely give me the chance I was waiting for. Instead of going to some new residence address, however, they pulled up at Euston Station and when I followed them inside I heard them ask for the Liverpool train, and also heard the guard answer that one had just left and there would not be another for some hours. Stangerson seemed to be put out at that, but Drebber was rather pleased than otherwise. I got so close to them in the bustle I could hear every word that passed between them. Drebber said that he had a little business of his own to do, and that if the other would wait for him he would soon rejoin him. Stangerson argued, but Drebber prevailed and I made a dash to get back on my cab in time to be at the curb when he came out.

"The moment for which I had waited so long had at last come. I had my enemies within my power. Together they could protect each other, but singly they were at my mercy. I did not act, however, with undue precipitation. My plans were already formed. There is no satisfaction in vengeance unless the offender has time to realize who it is that strikes him, and why retribution has come upon him. It had come to me some days before that one of the houses

in the Brixton Road would be ideal for my purpose. Working the late hours as I had been, there were several occasions when I took pairs of young gentlemen into the area, so they could find a place to be alone for an hour or so. Thus, it was merely a question of getting Drebber into my cab and bringing him to the spot I had chosen.

"When he left the station, he did not call for a cab as I had thought he would, but walked instead to a nearby pub. He remained inside for nearly an hour, and how to get Drebber to that house was the difficult problem which I had now to solve. He left the pub and before I could get in place at the curb, he had entered another hansom. I followed them, and much to my astonishment they pulled up at the same boarding house I had seen him leave just a short while before.

"He went inside and I waited in front after the other cab had left. I could see into the front window, where there was obviously some commotion. I saw the landlady moving about and once saw her throw both hands into the air as she remonstrated with her unwanted visitor. I could only see Drebber's shoulder and the back of his head, but he must have been talking to the young lad who lives there. The boy bolted suddenly into my view, and from the way he moved it appeared he was hobbled—by his pants, I supposed, because I could see just to his crotch where his little pecker was wobbling out between his shirt tails.

"Then the older boy came into the room. I could see that clearly, because he entered from the far side and came straight across. He took hold of Drebber's collar and he turned to say something to his brother and the landlady. After a few moments they went out and closed the door behind them. Then the older boy—right good-looking chap he was, too . . . dark curly hair and a face that might have been carved on a Greek statue . . . he shoved Drebber onto his knees after smacking him several times across the face. Then he unfastened his double row of buttons and pulled his penis from out his navy trousers.

Well, this was not a ook that would have at home, and he he Drebber's face down "I guess he tho from the way the ma that sailor's groin much. I could see th tween his lips, saw when he tried to choked. I was just before I had a cha though, I saw the against Drebber's pulled up tight ag was close to the en his loins with both his load, and final onto the floor.

"It was just flew open and Dre standing a foot or glow came from see his cock was downward, now, h he had made Dre about giving him then Drebber reac me to Halliday's "When I ha jumped so with j aneurism might my own mind wh right out into the have my last inte Brixton Lane, I fo without arousing problem for

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Well, this was not any child! He produced a length of Well, this was a length of cock that would have done credit to a stallion on the range at home, and he held it in one hand while he shoved Drebber's face down upon it with the other.

"I guess he thought he was punishing Drebber, but from the way the man's head bobbed up and down against that sailor's groin I don't think it bothered him very much. I could see the long, wide wedge of it plunging between his lips, saw the moisture gather in Drebber's eyes when he tried to swallow the whole thing and nearly choked. I was just hoping the sailor didn't strangle him before I had a chance to get my hands on him. Finally, though, I saw the young man start to slam his loins against Drebber's face, and from the way his balls were pulled up tight against the base of his prick I knew he was close to the end. Then he shoved Drebber hard against his loins with both hands, held him there while he let go his load, and finally pushed him off so he fell out of sight onto the floor.

"It was just a minute or so later that the front door flew open and Drebber came running out. The sailor was standing a foot or two back of the lighter area where the glow came from the lantern beside the door. But I could see his cock was still hanging out of his pants, arching downward, now, but still all slick and gleaming from what he had made Drebber do to him. He shouted something about giving him a taste of his own medicine, but right then Drebber reached my cab and jumped into it. 'Drive me to Halliday's Private Hotel,' said he.

"When I had him fairly inside my cab, my heart jumped so with joy I feared lest at this last moment my aneurism might go wrong. I drove slowly, weighing in my own mind what it was best to do. I might take him right out into the country, and there in some deserted lane have my last interview with him. We were so far from Brixton Lane, I feared I would never get him to the house without arousing his suspicions. But Drebber solved the problem for me. The craze for drink had seized him again,

and he ordered me to pull up outside a gin palace. He went in, leaving word that I should wait for him. There he remained until closing time, and when he came out he was so far gone I knew the game was in my hands.

"It was nearer one than twelve, and a wild, bleak night, blowing hard and raining in torrents. Dismal as it was outside, I was glad within—so glad that I could have shouted out from pure exultation. If any of you gentlemen have ever pined for a thing, and longed for it during many long years, and then suddenly found it within your reach, you would understand my feelings. I lit a cigar, and puffed at it to steady my nerves, but my hands were trembling and my temples were throbbing with excitement. As I drove, I could see old John Ferrier and sweet Lucius looking at me out of the darkness and smiling at me, just as plain as I see you in this room. All the way they were ahead of me, one on each side of the horse until I pulled up at the house in the Brixton Road.

"There was not a soul to be seen, nor a sound to be heard, except the dripping of the rain. When I looked in at the window, I found Drebber all huddled together in a drunken sleep. I shook him by the arm. 'It's time to get

out,' I said.

"'All right, cabby,' said he.

"I suppose he thought we had come to the hotel that he had mentioned, for he got out without another word, and followed me down the garden. I had to walk beside him to keep him steady, for he was still a little top-heavy. When we came to the door, I opened it and led him into the front room. I give you my word that all the way, the father and the son were walking in front of us.

"'It's infernally dark,' said he, stamping about.

"'We'll soon have a light,' I said, striking a match and putting it to a wax candle which I had brought with me. 'Now, Enoch Drebber,' I continued, turning to him, and holding the light to my own face, 'who am I?'

"He gazed at me with bleared, drunken eyes for a moment, and then I saw horror spring up in them and

convulse his with me. He stagg the perspiration br leaned back again Thad always know none of the others given me the satisf "You dog!" Lake City to St. P. me. Now, at last With this, I pulle coat and I presse but stopped him he wore beneath maker in such att wretched creatur beloved Lucius me-all the whil of mares. Now h of his own perv

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convulse his whole features, which showed me that he knew me. He staggered back with a livid face, and I saw the perspiration break out upon his brow. At the sight the perspiration break out upon his brow. At the sight I leaned back against the door and laughed loud and long. I had always known that vengeance would be sweet, but none of the others I had taken care of could possibly have given me the satisfaction I anticipated with him.

Lake City to St. Petersburg, and you have always escaped me. Now, at last your wanderings have come to an end!' With this, I pulled a hunting knife from under my waist-coat and I pressed it to his throat. I made him disrobe, but stopped him when I saw that pair of lady's drawers he wore beneath his trousers. That he should meet his maker in such attire seemed so appropriate! Here was the wretched creature who had brought about the death of my beloved Lucius on the poor excuse of the boy's love for me—all the while pretending to be the stallion in his herd of mares. Now he sat upon a couch, dressed in the badge of his own perversity.

"But Drebber seemed to sense the pleasure I took from seeing him in lavender lace. With a quick, sudden thrust of his wrist, he slipped the knickers off his hips and threw them onto the pile of his other clothes. At first, this angered me; but on sober reflection I knew it would make my task easier, as I fully intended to castrate him as I had done to the others.

"Once again I pressed my knife against his throat and made him lie down flat upon the couch. I sat astride his naked chest and with my other hand I opened the buttons on my trousers. All I intended, at the start, was to make him take my penis in his mouth and to hold in that posture of supplication while I reviled him for his perfidy. It seemed a fitting way to make him spend his last few moments, and something that would intensify his comprehension of his enormous crime.

"But Drebber had developed a passion for cocks through the years of his exile. Once I sank my softened

member into the heat of his mouth, such a furious passion rose all about it I admit to being momentarily carried away from my original intent. Still holding the blade to his neck, I pulled his head deeper into the enclosure of my thighs and drove his face against my body. My cock was driven fully into him, where the spasming muscles of his throat kept clamping about the shaft and seemed to pull at the very insides of it. I had never experienced such a sensation of bestial lust. It was not the tender feeling I had known with Lucius, nor the joy I had known from those men with whom I had joined my body before I met my beloved. With Drebber, the thrill of physical bliss was coupled with the knowledge of my dom. ination.

"I lunged and drove my prick between his lips. I made my balls to swing beneath my crotch, striking them against his chin each time I slammed my rod more fully into him. I could hear his choking protest and felt the phlegm which rose to coat my shaft. But I had no cause to show consideration, and my passions boiled over to obscure all sense of reason. Except to obtain my present job, I had never touched another since this fiend had taken Lucius from me. Thus the sudden, sensual arousal was almost enough to blind me and detour me from my original course. I felt the uncontrollable waves of arousal rise to enclose me, and I shuddered through my entire body as the seed began to spurt from my swollen cock.

"Through all these latter phases of our exchange, Drebber had displayed obvious signs of distress. He retched and struggled as best he could with my legs pinning his arms against his sides. My pubic hair completely masked his nose and eyes, while my throbbing poker pressed deep inside his throat and my sperm pulsed in

spurting bolts down his gullet.

"Only when I finally regained my senses, did I realize he was dead, strangled by the mass of my sex as it restricted his breathing passages. Then it occurred to me how much more poignant this had been, for it was the

precise manner o overcame me. my nostrils—and stepped back from in the throes of blood and drew upon the wall. "After this, ber's body and my cab, when m they are so freq the ring from Lu ring which my had given to th the pocket emp house, probably cloth. I spun hack towards t

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precise manner of my beloved Lucius' passing. Emotion precise manner of my beloved begin to stream from so overcame me, I felt the blood begin to stream from my nostrils—another result of my physical debilities. I my nostrils—another result of Enoch Drebber, and still stepped back from the body of Enoch Drebber, and still in the throes of elation, I dipped a finger into my own in the throes of elation, I dipped a finger into my own blood and drew a replica of the instrument of his death upon the wall.

"After this, I put the lacy underpants back on Drebber's body and departed. I had gone a short distance in my cab, when my fingers stole to my waistcoat pocket as they are so frequently wont to do. You see, I had taken the ring from Lucius' finger before I buried him, the same ring which my own dear father had worn, and which I had given to the boy as a token of my love. When I felt the pocket empty, I realized I must have lost it in the house, probably when I pulled the knife from under the cloth. I spun the cab about and raced like a madman back towards the house.

"As I approached, I saw a police officer idling in front of the building. I quickly pulled my cab into a sidestreet and staggered down the block as if I were drunk. While I hoped the constable might be gone by then, I wished to ensure he would not bother to accost me, as it would seem unlikely I was on some criminal mission. I had almost reached the front walk when I came face to face with the officer, who must have wandered off and returned when he saw me. At close range, I saw he was the same fellow who had permitted several of my passengers to use the premises in the past; but being alone I could not pretend to a similar course. I was sure he did not recognize me as the cabby who had brought the others, but he made no move to leave and in a final attempt to encourage his departure, I lured him into a darkened alley and fell onto my knees in the street before him.

"He seemed to hesitate a moment before allowing me to proceed, but after a hasty glance about he made no overt protest. I opened his trousers and took his penis in

my hand. It was a formidable tool, and despite my previous distraction I began to take some pleasure in what I did. His cock was very great in girth, though some what short. As it reached its full dimensions, though, it fairly filled my mouth and I drove myself hard upon him. The thoughts that filtered through my brain were many and diverse. The memory of my sweet love was freshly rekindled by every stroke of his penis through the grasp. ing pressure of my lips. I saw the gentle form of Lucius before me and I imagined myself kneeling between his legs, holding his dear, beloved penis in my mouth. I savoured the love and the fullness of him, the pressing swell of his cock as the constable grasped my head and began to beat his loins against my face. I could smell the same clean aroma of fresh linens and soap, the slightly pungent odor of his groin and the very maleness I held within me. I closed my eyes and in these few seconds I was once again in Utah, beneath the towering pines, holding the love of my dearest boy against my tongue.

"Then the officer unleashed his flood, and the impression was intensified. The sweetly salty flow burst upon the back of my throat, spread through my mouth and filled me with the joy I had thought forgotten. I held his shaft far longer than he might have wished, because he finally eased the softened member free and told me I had better leave. I had been so enraptured, so lost in my own recall I had forgotten the reason for returning. But the constable still showed no inclination to depart, and I wondered if he had planned some assignation which detained him. Knowing the danger I would be in if he entered the house and found Drebber's remains, and remembering, too, that I still had Stangerson to take care of, I went on my way without a further attempt to reclaim the ring.

"That was how Enoch Drebber came to his end. All I had to do then was find Stangerson and do the same for him. I knew he was staying at Halliday's Private Hotel, because that had been Drebber's destination. They had

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"Stangerson was of a more stalwart character than his companion, and obviously even more skilled in the act of fellatio. I forced him to strip his nightshirt and I used him precisely as I had Drebber. However, though I achieved a second ejaculation and held my prick in his throat for a much longer time, Stangerson continued to breathe and I believe he actually enjoyed what I was doing to him. Finally, I struck him on the side of the head, and believing him to be unconscious I was about to castrate him and leave him to bleed quietly to death. Instead, he came to his senses while my knife was poised against his groin, and because of his sudden motion I plunged it into him. I then held him back against the mattress, while his life's blood oozed away. I guess my intention was to mutilate him afterward, but by the time his head dropped back on the pillow and his eyes had closed in death I seemed to feel the gentle hand of Lucius on my shoulder. I heard the soft tones of his voice calling to me . . . telling me I had avenged his death and he was waiting for me on the other side.

"I stood up, dipped a finger in Stangerson's gore and drew another upright penis on the wall. Then I climbed down the ladder and returned to my cab. I had no real thought of escape, Mr. Holmes, except for the natural instinct of self-preservation which we, all of us, share. My own end is foreordained, and it is only a matter of days before I join my beloved Lucius in Eternity."

Sherlock Holmes had remained silent through this entire discourse, occasionally nodding when some point in the narrative confirmed his previous deductions. Now he leaned forward, his eyes seeming brighter than usual, so I knew he was holding back the tears which our unfortunate captive's story had generated. "One point," he said in a broken whisper. "Your accomplice who retrieved the ring?"

Jefferson Hope shrugged his shoulders. "In the final hours of my life," he answered softly, his voice now touched with a heavy sadness, "the impossible has happened. After leaving Drebber in the Brixton Road I happened on a waif who sat sobbing at the curb. I took the youngster in, and to my utter amazement . . . when I washed away the grime, I found the living embodiment of my own true love. The lad has stayed with me in the full knowledge that I have but a short time left, and it was he who retrieved the only material possession which has any value or meaning for me." With that, he withdrew the plain gold band from his waistcoat pocket and held it up for our inspection.

"In fact," continued Jefferson Hope, "this is the one request I have to make of the police. If I may be permitted to keep this ring, I shall leave this life with a far greater ease, for it shall seem to me as if my love were somehow at my bedside."

Gregson tried to answer him, but the words seemed to stick in his throat, and he turned his face away to hide the deep emotion that showed so openly upon his features. Lestrade's mouth moved a moment before he managed to speak. "Yes," he gasped hoarsely. "By all means, keep the ring." He glanced at the inspector, who nodded in agreement.

"Thank you," said Jefferson Hope softly.

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THE QUEER AFFAIR OF THE GREEK INTERPRETER

During my close and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I had not thus far heard him refer either to his brother Mycroft, nor to his arch enemy, the infamous Professor Moriarty. Neither of these names came to my attention until nearly a year after the case I have called A Study In Lavender Lace. While they are probably of no great significance, I recite the circumstances here, in order that the reader may more logically follow the sequence of events in Holmes' and my relationship. [We have deleted, here, a number of cases which vary little from Dr. Watson's previously published accounts—Ed.]

It was after tea of a summer evening, and I was lolling in bed with Holmes. My companion had been in

a singularly romantic mood, and his lips had not departed my penis for the better part of an hour. I had long since been drained completely dry, or so I thought having ejaculated no less than half a dozen times. Still, those marvellously responsive membranes continued to draw and knead the flesh until my entire body tingled with an urgent need to overcome its state of transitory impotence. I lay back on the coverlet with my eyes closed, enthralled by the surging rapture of exquisite sensation. With his extreme perception and empathetic abilities, Holmes seemed to sense each nuance and subtle variation within me.

His use created a veritable flood of images. Visions of sturdy, well-muscled youth moved through my imagination. Without my looking at him, the hardness of his sinew, his flexing shoulders pressing on my thighs, evoked the picture of his dark hair hanging like a veil about my sex. His handsome, aquiline features were contorted by their efforts in surrounding my shaft. I had remained half hardened, creating a girth and length just sufficient to require this heightened expenditure of energies. I pulled a pillow under my head and through a fluttering of lashes observed the semi-rigid projection that rose from my groin, the contrast of its ruby-violet to the pinkishwhite of the lips as they stretched about the fleshy cylinder. Because Holmes' hair had tumbled across his brow, there was little I could see of his face, but I could hear the soft expressions of his satisfaction, the moaning sighs and an occasional deep suckling sound when his airtight contact was interrupted by the rapidity of his motions.

Despite my previous apparent depletion, I found I was growing hard again. The twisted veins began to etch themselves along the surface of my expanding penis. I could feel a swelling surge about the crown as this caught and ratcheted along the row of his molars. I was enveloped in searing warmth and moisture, debilitated by his demanding possession. Finally, I felt my energies gather once again. My springy hardness projected into him,

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tion until I was quivering with anxious lust. My fingers fairly ached to seize his head and shove it fully down upon my loins. But his restraint created a certain quality of expectation within me, generating anew that same, boiling arousal with which I had already answered him several times before. My testicles grew taut against the base of my shaft, and my entire being trembled with fierce,

lusting desire. "Beautiful!" Holmes would mutter, laving the sides of my quivering projection. His hot breath cascaded across the head and his tongue traced the underside clear to the base, where his lips closed about my sac and his rapid intake of breath pulled both testicles into the grasping inferno. I found myself moaning and thrashing about beneath his onslaught, legs twisted against the weight of his chest and upper arms. I was imprisoned, in a sense, held firmly in place and subjected to the torturous, languid

use he chose to make of me.

His lips returned to the crown, held there until he dropped full upon me and the searing wetness of his mouth enclosed my entire sex. His hands, so warm, so demanding, traveled sensuously across my midsection, sliding in a circular motion toward the rib cage. He seized my nipples and squeezed them at the same moment he raised his mouth and again dropped clear to the base of my shaft. I felt the crown slide through constricting membranes, violently penetrating his throat. I was quaking so badly I seemed on the verge of expiration-or explosion. My emotional responses became so mingled it was difficult to separate or define them. The only clear image in my thoughts was the deep, abiding regard I felt for Sherlock Holmes, a love that swelled anew with every lunging twist of his form on mine.

Finally, he brought me to the very pinnacle of ex-

quisite sensation. I felt the desperate contractions within me; and a deep, dark abyss begin to open . . . to draw me; and a deep, dans maw, to engulf me in its formless euphoria. My eyes closed again. I saw nothing . . . and everything. I sensed the frantic building of pleasurable sensation, flashing colours that blinded my inner mind and debilitated my receptors. My rushing, pounding pulse obliterated all other awareness as my lower body rose against him. I lunged upward with my loins and delivered a final blast of fluid . . . fired deep within the steaming pit as Holmes gripped the base of my cock and this final vestige of passion was drained from my being.

I was gasping for breath, swathed in sweat and in a state of trembling weakness when Sherlock Holmes mounted my thighs and knelt in towering naked glory above me. Dark blotches of distorted emotion still floated before my eyes as I watched his hard, exquisitely defined masculinity rise higher and higher, his torso hovering like some massive disembodied spectre of sexual might, My own sex lay soft and bloated across my lower belly, still gleaming with the slowly dissipating layer of moisture. His enormous lance thrust outward from his groin, arching slightly in its furious state of erection, the crown expanded . . . purple-red in its lusting, pulsing readiness. His testicles hung deep beneath, grazing the surface of my pubis, depressing the hairs and permitting me to sense their fleshy weight upon my skin. He was slowly masturbating himself, working the shaft into that furious rigidity that caused every vein and sinew to impress its form against the outer sheath.

I watched him silently, experiencing the same pleasure I had known in the past. I observed the reddish glow of light along the corded delineation of his abdomen, the smooth, solid planes of his chest. Without thinking about it I reached up, ran my hands across the warm solidity of his midsection. I tested the hard depressions at his hips, the furnace heat that rose from his groin, the taut wall of his waist and sides. I stretched to reach his breast, alloved my fingers pe. I squeezed the suck sharply at en pleasure in him to rightened, vibrate pressures. The me nited up and bas escaped his parter flood of scattered across my prone, It was after

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It was after this, when Holmes had discharged the last of his spurting cascade and was lying beside me, our naked bodies compressed together beneath the coverlet, that he first broached the subject of these other personalities. "You are a truly remarkable man," I had whispered. "Your sexual powers seem no more limited than your deductive abilities. In all these areas, you reign supreme," I had added.

"Ah, Watson, would that your faith in me were fully justified," said he.

"You don't mean to say you are rivalled?" I exclaimed in surprise. "I could hardly credit such extraordinary abilities to another living soul."

Holmes chuckled and drew me more tightly against him. "There are two men," he continued softly, "either of whom might challenge me. . . ."

"Impossible," said I. "Why, from all you have told me and on the basis of my own observations, it seems obvious your faculties for deduction, as well as your sexual might, are due to a unique combination of systematic training and heredity."

"To some extent," he answered thoughtfully. "But my hereditary abilities are shared, you see, with the first of these two persons to whom I allude."

"I do not understand," I returned. "And most especially these hereditary abilities. I mean, how do you . . . ?"

"Because my brother Mycroft possesses these gifts to

an even larger degree than I do," he said simply.

This was news to me indeed. If there were another man with such singular powers in England, how was it that neither police nor public were aware of his intellec. tual potential? And sexually, of course, such a man would surely have gained sufficient renown within our own closed circle that I must have heard some mention of him. I put the question, with a hint that it was my own companion's modesty which made him acknowledge his brother as his superior. Holmes laughed at my suggestion.

"My dear Watson," said he, "I cannot agree with those who rank modesty among the virtues. To the logician all things should be seen exactly as they are, and to underestimate one's self is as much a departure from truth as to exaggerate one's own abilities. When I say, therefore, that Mycroft has better powers of observation than I, you may take it that I am speaking the exact and literal truth. As to his sexual potentials, let me only comment that as youths on our parents' estates, we engaged in numerous affairs that bore the stamp of incest, and in every instance I found myself unable to compete with my brother's insatiable desires."

"Is he your junior?" I asked.

"Seven years my senior."

"How comes it that he is unknown?"

"Oh, he is very well known in his own circle."

"Where, then?"

"Well, in the Diogenes Club, for example."

I had heard of this infamous institution, and my face must have proclaimed as much, for Sherlock Holmes laughed aloud and remarked on the shocked response that etched itself across my features. "Oh, come, come, old fellow!" he gasped between his gales of laughter. "The Diogenes Club may be the queerest place in London, and Mycroft one of the queerest men. But the activities of the members are largely restricted to their own circles, and they play their little game with completely willing subjects . . . unlike . . ."

His voice trailed of an almost glassy stare. an anna ce-like state wh another of his opiates known when watching Such blatant misuse of and I confess I now always did when Holn have trembled, because I continued to question "Unlike . . . who "One other man," ful person, who pride tential and uses his s

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His voice trailed off, and he gazed at the ceiling with an almost glassy stare. For a moment I was reminded of an almost state when under the influence of one or his trance of his opiates. I sensed the same fear I had known when watching him insert the needle into his arm. Such blatant misuse of drugs had always frightened me, and I confess I now experienced the nameless dread I always did when Holmes was in this condition. I must have trembled, because he abruptly broke his revery and I continued to question him.

"Unlike . . . whom?" I insisted.

"One other man," muttered Holmes. "A truly dreadful person, who prides himself on his terrible sexual potential and uses his skills for the evil fulfillment of his own degenerate needs."

He was referring, of course, to that archfiend, Professor James Moriarty. However, Holmes chose to let the issue hang there for the moment, going no further into it. Instead, he suddenly sat up in bed, his eyes alive and active, which relieved my former anxiety.

"But you must meet my brother Mycroft," he said quickly. He twisted his long, lean body over the side of the bed and extracted his watch from the pile of clothing on the floor. "He's always at the club from quarter of five to twenty of eight," muttered Holmes. "It's six, now, so if you care for a stroll this beautiful evening I shall be very happy to introduce you to both curiosities. I refer,

of course, to my brother and to his club."

Despite my inner reservations, I said no more and five minutes later we were in the street, walking towards Regent's Circus. I must confess to a terrible sinking sensation as we approached the club of Mycroft Holmes, for its mysterious rites had given rise to the most frightful speculations. Had it not been for the extreme wealth of several members, I have no doubt the police would have long since involved themselves in some expository activities. Rumour had it that the club members ascribed to the

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teachings of De Sade, while the memoirs of Gilles de Rais were said to be their bible.

"Not completely true," remarked Holmes in reply to my carefully guarded question. "Although certain rather esoteric rites are performed by the membership, the club has a firmly established rule that all participants must be involved on a voluntary basis. Pain, you see, when given to one who desires it, is not true misery. But come," he added brusquely, "you shall see for yourself."

"And your brother Mycroft is a participant in these

. . . orgies?" asked I incredulously.

"Not really, not really," muttered Holmes. "What to us may be a way of life-not in the extreme form, of course, but generally speaking-is to Mycroft the merest hobby of a dilettante. He is an observer, you see, basically a lazy person who would prefer to watch the application of another's skill rather than practice his own and expend his singular energies. Even his work . . . Mycroft has an extraordinary faculty for figures. . . ." He broke off with a chuckle. "Written digits as well as those which are more rounded to complete some exquisite image of masculine beauty," he added. "But Mycroft audits the books in some government departments, and lodges in Pall Mall. He walks round the corner into Whitehall every morning and back every evening. From year's end to year's end he takes no other exercise, other than at his club . . . which is just opposite his rooms."

"I still cannot recall his name," I muttered absently. I was becoming more distracted the closer we came to the Diogenes Club, and must confess I was not listening to my companion with the attention that usually marked our

exchanges.

"There are many men in London who-some from shyness, some from misanthropy—have no wish for the company of their fellows," remarked Holmes. "It was for the convenience of these that the Club was started," he continued. "Except for their secret activities in the basement, the most rigid rules of silence and personal au1000my are maintained to another in the comm volunteering his service ment is scheduled next permitted to take the in the Strangers' Root stances, allowed. My b Thave myself found it on the upper levels an We had reached walking down it from stopped at a door so. and, cautioning me I hall. We were forced companion rapped so by a nude, blond you He had stood a mom my companion's face

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We had reached Pall Mall as we talked, and were walking down it from the St. James' end. Sherlock Holmes stopped at a door some little distance from the Carlton, and, cautioning me not to speak, he led the way into a hall. We were forced to stop at a second door, where my companion rapped softly, and we were presently admitted by a nude, blond youth of the most exquisite proportions. He had stood a moment in the doorway, gazing first into my companion's face and then into mine, before stepping back to allow us entrance. The almost barbaric splendour of the place quite overwhelmed me, although I may have been responding more to the conspicuous manhood of the young fellow who had answered our summons.

Holmes seemed quite at home in the long hall where we found ourselves, though I noted his eyes travelled swiftly across the radiant, glowing flesh of our guide. The young man led us down a poorly illuminated hallway, past an extensive area of glass that overlooked a large and luxurious room. A considerable number of men were sitting about and reading papers, most of them garbed in quite outlandish costumes—some with wide black leather bandoliers across their chests, or with belts of the same material around their waists. Two or three were masked with tight-fitting black hoods, and none of the ones I could see was accoutered about his lower body with more than a loinstrap or codpiece. In all, they were quite the most sinister-looking segment of humanity I had ever seen. Still, I found myself responding with a peculiar sexual thrill that sent shivers of anticipation up my spine.

Holmes must have noted my fascination, because he chuckled softly and took my arm, drawing me after our youthful guide. "Come now, old fellow," he remarked softly. "You are surely beyond sensual response at this point."

"Yes. Yes, I am," I agreed, and turned my face away from the window. This projected my line of vision directly toward the back of the blond young man who was still leading us along the hall, and much to my horrified surprise I discerned the certain evidence of some unspeakable abuse across his back and buttocks. "Holmes," I whispered sharply. "That fellow has been most cruelly beaten . . . whipped!"

"No, not really," chuckled my companion. "Whipped or beaten perhaps, but surely not cruelly. Remember, I told you the Club permits only voluntary participants in its rituals. Whatever has befallen that young man, it was only . . ." Abruptly, my companion pressed a finger to his lips and we proceeded the rest of the way in silence.

Our guide opened the door to a small chamber which looked out into Pall Mall, and motioned us inside. When we had entered, he left us with never a word having been spoken to indicate he knew whom we had come to see. Obviously, Holmes was well-enough known that the matter presented no difficulties. A moment later the door opened again, and one of the most extraordinary individuals I have ever seen came into the room. I knew it could only be Mycroft Holmes, because his features so resembled that of his brother. Beyond this, however, there was little similarity. This man was several inches taller than my friend, and his muscular body seemed to glow with a healthy vibrancy, quite at odds with the quiet pallor of Sherlock Holmes. He wore only a wide black leather belt, from which his genitals were suspended in a narrow pouch that did little to conceal their massive structure. In all, this gigantic version of my friend exuded an aura of youthful energy, tinged only by a gray suggestion of experience about the brows.

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After Holmes introduced us, Mycroft put out a broad, After nomice put out a broad, flat hand that completely enveloped mine. "I am glad to flat hand the in a booming basso. "I hear of meet you, sir," said he in a booming basso. "I hear of Sherlock everywhere since you became his chronicler. By Sherlock, Sherlock, I expected to see you round last week the way, to consult me over that Manor House case. I thought you might be a little out of your depth."

"No, I solved it," said my friend, smiling.

"It was Adams, of course."

"Yes, it was Adams."

"I was sure of it from the first." The two sat down together, back from the window to assure Mycroft's remaining invisible from the street. Holmes' casual manner, despite his brother's nearly naked condition, was so ludicrous I found myself on the verge of near-hysterical laughter. It was the newcomer's sharp, bird-of-prey eyes that restrained me, that and the general sense of foreboding the whole place had evoked within me.

"To anyone who wishes to study mankind, this is the spot," remarked Mycroft Holmes. "Look at the magnificent types," he added, waving one massive arm toward the street beyond the window. "Look at those two men who are coming towards us, for example."

"The older gentleman with his kept boy?" suggested Holmes.

"Precisely," agreed his brother. "A most exemplary

The two men had stopped opposite the window. The extravagantly elegant attire of the older man, plus his having one rather showy ring on either hand, must have been the clue to his homosexuality. The other was a very small, dark young fellow, with his hat pushed back to reveal a full, lustrous head of hair.

"An old soldier, I perceive," said Sherlock, nodding at the taller, older man.

"And very recently discharged," remarked the brother.

"Served in India, I see."

"And a non-commissioned officer."

"Royal Artillery, I fancy," said Sherlock.

"And very infatuated with his boy."

"But over a short-term relationship."

"Come," said I, laughing, "this is too much!"

"Surely," answered Holmes, "it is not hard to see that a man with that bearing, expression of authority, and sun-baked skin, is a soldier, is more than a private and is not long from India."

"That he has not left the service long is shown by his still wearing his ammunition boots, despite the exquisite tailoring of the rest of his costume," observed Mycroft.

"He has not the cavalry stride, yet he wears his hat on one side, as is shown by the lighter skin on that portion of his brow. His weight is against his being a sapper. Hence, he must be in the artillery."

"Then, of course, his nervous attention to the youth beside him is ample evidence of the jealous nature of their relationship. The fact of the younger man's apparen discomfort in that high collar marks him as a person unused to wearing proper clothes, and if you will observe his hands you will note a roughness about the palms and several deposits beneath the fingernails that are distinctly not the mark of a gentleman. . . ."

"Hence a kept boy," added Holmes triumphantly, "and by the quite diverse ages of the two the relationship is unquestionable."

"To say nothing of the furtive glances the boy casts upon other youths his own age who wander past. No, it is not love or deep regard which holds him by his mentor's side."

"And such a display would not be as likely in a boy more experienced in the way of conjugal life, when his protector pays the bills and demands his just deserts. This attitude, plus his lack of comfort in his present surroundings confirms the diagnosis."

"Amazing," said I.

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"By the way, Sherlock," said he, "I have had something quite after your own heart—a most singular problem—submitted to my judgment. I really had not the energy to follow it up save in a very incomplete fashion, but it gave me a basis for some pleasing speculations and promises some further entertaining consequences this evening. If you would care to hear the facts. . . ."

"My dear Mycroft, I should be delighted."

His brother scribbled a note upon a leaf of paper which he produced by some miraculous manipulation beneath his groin. Ringing the bell, he handed it to the nude, youthful waiter who answered his call.

"We shall have to wait a moment, as they must bring Mr. Melas from the dungeon," he said.

"From . . . the . . . what?" I gasped.

"From the basement, as I told you," said Holmes. For one of the few times in our relationship, his tone was almost sharp.

"Mr. Melas brought his problem to me yesterday," explained Mycroft Holmes, "and he committed the unpardonable crime of bursting into the main lounge and disturbing several of the members. A condition of my helping him was that he abide by our rules and submit his flesh to a suitable punishment. He was in such desperate straits he agreed forthwith, though I must add he did not seem unduly disturbed at the prospect."

"Melas . . . Melas," muttered my friend. "Greek, I should think," he added thoughtfully. "A terribly maso-chistic race."

"Yes, decidedly," returned his brother. "And this

ethnic characteristic is most certainly amplified in the

The door had opened again and Mr. Melas was brought in by the two serving boys—the one who had originally conducted us down the hall, and the second lad who had answered Mycroft's summons. Wordlessly, they deposited the tightly chained figure on a chair and withdrew. I could hardly credit the condition of the prisoner! He was bound around with several heavy lengths of chain. His wrists were locked behind him and attached beneath his crotch to another band of iron about his genitals. His mouth and eyes were bound with leather devices which rendered him both mute and sightless until Mycroft unfastened the intricate mechanisms that held them in place.

Mr. Melas was a short, stocky man, with the body of an avid gymnast. His face, once the various contrivances were removed, proved to be of a typically dark, Aegean handsomeness. I doubt he was more than five-and-twenty. Other than his bindings he was quite nude, and the long, rope-like appendage that hung from his groin seemed to snake its way across the chair seat to drape its bulbous crown beneath the edge.

"You may speak freely, slave," said Mycroft sternly. "This gentleman is my brother and he will fulfill our portion of the contract even as you do yours."

"Thank you, sir," gasped the captive. "I . . ."

"And be quick about it," snapped Mycroft Holmes.

"Yes, sir!" repeated Melas. He turned his gaze on my friend, and after a few gulping, swallowing motions, seemed to orient himself to the situation. "I did not believe the police would credit me-on my word, I did not," he began in a rush of words. "Just because they have never heard of it before—but that is why I came to Mr. Holmes, instead. I know I shall never be easy in my mind until I know what has become of my poor man with the sticking plaster upon his . . . his genitals."

"I'm all attention," said Sherlock Holmes.

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"This is Wednesday evening," said the captive.

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"It happens not infrequently that I am sent for at strange hours by foreigners who get into difficulties, or by travellers who arrive late and wish my services. I was not surprised, therefore, on Monday night when a Mr. Latimer, a very fashionably dressed, foppish young man, came up to my rooms and asked me to accompany him in a cab which was waiting at the door. A Greek friend had come to see him upon business, he said, and as he could speak nothing but his own tongue, the services of an interpreter were indispensable. He gave me to understand that his house was some distance off, in Kensington, and he seemed to be in a great hurry, bustling me rapidly into the cab when we had descended to the street."

As I listened to this narrative, I found myself responding again to a tickling urge to laugh. Mr. Melas, despite his obvious physical discomfort, was speaking rapidly and with the same fluency I might have expected had we been facing one another over a tea tray in the refined atmosphere of a manor house. Holmes' comment on the basic masochism of the Greek race came back to me, and I did emit the barest suggestion of a giggle.

Mycroft cast a sharp glance in my direction, at which the sound froze on my lips and I immediately turned a silent, serious visage toward our captive.

"When I say Latimer took me into a cab," continued Melas, "I must remark that I soon became doubtful as to whether it was not a carriage in which I found myself. It was certainly more roomy than the ordinary four-wheeled disgrace to London, and the fittings, though

frayed, were of rich quality. Mr. Latimer seated himself opposite to me and we started off through Charing Cross and up the Shaftesbury Avenue. We had come upon Oxford Street and I had ventured some remark as to this being a roundabout way to Kensington, when my words were arrested by the extraordinary conduct of my companion.

"He began drawing a most formidable-looking bludg. eon from his pocket, a huge, heavy sap that must have been weighted with lead. It took me several moments to recognize the form, after which I sat back completely dumbfounded. It was the most monstrous artificial phallus! Latimer switched his weapon back and forth several times, as if to test its weight and strength. He then slapped the shaft against one palm and regarded me with a knowing, sardonic grin. 'As a good Greek,' said he, 'you should recognize the exquisite proportions.' Then he placed it without another word upon the seat beside him. Having done this, he drew up the windows on each side, and I found to my astonishment that they were covered with paper so as to prevent my seeing through them.

"I am sorry to cut off your view, Mr. Melas,' said he. 'The fact is I have no intention that you should see what the place is to which we are driving. It might possibly be inconvenient to me if you could find your way

there again.'

"As you can imagine, I was utterly taken aback by such an address and by the incredible weapon that lay upon the seat beside my companion. Mr. Latimer was a powerful, broad-shouldered young fellow, and quite apart from the bludgeon I am certain I should not have had the slightest chance in a struggle with him.

"'This is very extraordinary conduct, Mr. Latimer,' I stammered. 'You must be aware that what you are doing

is quite illegal.'

"'It is somewhat of a liberty, no doubt,' said he, patting the enormous phallus, 'but we'll make it up to you.' At this, he cast such an evil smile in my direction I

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felt the blood run cold and fear came down to grip my loins as if Death, himself, sat opposite me. 'I must warn loins as if Death, himself, sat opposite me. 'I must warn you, however,' he continued, 'that if at any time tonight you attempt to raise an alarm or do anything which is you attempt to raise an alarm or do anything which is against my interests, you will find it a very serious thing. I beg you to remember that no one knows where you are, I beg you to remember that no one knows where you are, and that, whether you are in this carriage or in my house, you are equally in my power.'

"His words were quiet, but he had a rasping way of saying them. This, added to his constant patting of the phallus, was very threatening. I sat in silence, wondering what on earth could be his reason for kidnapping me in this extraordinary fashion. Whatever it might be, it was perfectly clear there was no possible use in my resisting, and that I could only wait to see what might befall.

"For nearly two hours we drove without my having the least clue as to where we were going. Sometimes the rattle of the stones told of a paved causeway, and at others our smooth, silent course suggested asphalt; but, save for this variation in sound, there was nothing at all which could in the remotest way help me to form a guess as to where we were. The paper over each window was impenetrable to light, and a blue curtain was drawn across the glasswork in front. It was a quarter past seven when we felt Pall Mall, and my watch showed me that it was ten minutes to nine when we at last came to a standstill. My companion let down the window and I caught the glimpse of a low, arched doorway with a lamp burning above it. As I was hurried from the carriage the door swung open, and I found myself inside the house with a vague impression of lawn and trees on each side of me as I entered. Whether these were private grounds, however, or bonafide country was more than I could possibly venture to say.

"There was a colored gas-lamp inside which was turned so low I could see little save that the hall was of some size and hung with pictures. In the dim light I could make out that the person who opened the door was

a small, mean-looking young man with shoulders like a bull. As he turned towards us the glint of light fell across a steel or silver chain he had fastened tightly about his throat.

"'Is this Melas?' said he.

"'Yes. Harold,' replied Latimer.

"'Well done, well done! No ill-will, Mr. Melas, I hope, but we could not get on without you. If you deal fair with us you'll not regret it, but if you try any tricks. God help you!' He spoke in a nervous, jerky fashion, and with little giggling laughs in between, but somehow he impressed me with fear more than the other.

"'What did you want with me?' I asked.

"'Only to ask a few questions and make certain tests upon the person of a certain Greek gentleman who is . . . er, visiting us. But say no more than you are told to say, and do no more than you are told to do, or . . .' Here came the nervous giggle again. '. . . you had better never have been born.'

"As he spoke he opened a door and showed the way into a room which appeared to be very richly furnished, but again the only light was afforded by a single lamp half-turned down. The chamber was certainly large, and the way in which my feet sank into the carpet as I stepped across it told me of its richness. I caught glimpses of velvet chairs, a high white marble mantelpiece, and what seemed to be a suit of Japanese armour at one side of it. There was a chair just under the lamp, and the young man motioned that I should sit in it. Mr. Latimer had left us, much to my relief, though my anxiety was far from being stilled by the mysterious, somewhat effeminate manner of my host.

"Of a sudden, Latimer appeared. He had returned through another door, leading with him a naked, wellbuilt man of perhaps thirty years. The fellow's hands were secured behind him with heavy ropes, but most extraordinary of all was the mass of adhesive plaster that completely enveloped his genitals. As he approached the

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light I could see with increasing clarity that he was a light I could be requisite proportions, though obviously gentleman of exquisite proportions, though obviously gentleman and with an underiable around horror at his appearance and with an undeniable arousal at the beauty of his visage and the barbaric sexuality of his bondage. "'Have you the phallus?' asked the young man with

the chain about his neck. "At this, Latimer nodded, holding the massive replica up level with his face. He made a lewd sucking sound and touched his lips to the crown as if to caress its potency. The other nodded, smiled grimly as his eyes darted between the captive and myself. 'You will ask our guest if he is ready to give us the coordinates.'

"The man's eyes flashed fire, and I shuddered in spite of myself. Stuttering, I managed to relay this peculiar

request to the captive.

"'Never!' he replied. Yet, despite the vehemence of his answer, I detected a pained effort . . . perhaps a weakness in his tone.

"'On no conditions?' I asked at the bidding of our tyrant.

"'Only if my boys are permitted to leave in peace and safety before I divulge their whereabouts.'

"The young man giggled in his venomous way.

"'You know what awaits you, then?'

"'I care nothing for myself.'

"These are samples of the questions and answers which made up our strange conversation. Again and again I had to ask him whether he would give in and tell his captors the location of this place, which I took to be an island by the peculiar phrasing of certain responses. Again and again I had the same indignant reply. But soon a happy thought came to me. I took to adding little sentences of my own to each question, innocent ones at first, to test whether either of our companions knew anything of the matter; and then, as I found they showed no sign I played a more dangerous game. Our conversation ran something like this:

"'You can do no good by this obstinacy. Who are

"'I care not. I am a stranger in London."

"'Your fate will be on your own head. How long have you been here?'

"'Let it be so. Three weeks.'

"The property can never be yours. What ails you?"

"'Neither the property nor my boys shall go to villains. They torture me sexually!"

"'You shall go free if you give the location. How?"

"'I will never tell. Aphrodisiacs and these bindings."

"'You are not doing your boys any real service.
Who are you?"

"'Let me speak to the one you hold. Kratides of Athens.'

"'You shall see him if you give the necessary information. Is the boy a prisoner, too?'

"'Then I shall never see him, Yes.'

"Another five minutes, Mr. Holmes, and I should have wormed out the whole story under their very noses. My very next question might have cleared the matter up, but at that instant the door opened and a lovely, darkhaired youth stepped into the room. I could not see him clearly enough to know more than that he was tall and graceful, with black hair and clad in some sort of filmy white gown.

"'Harold,' said he, speaking English with a broken accent, 'I could not stay away any longer. It is so lonely up there and that wine has been making me stand erect

until the-Oh, my God, it is Paul!'

"These last words were in Greek, and at the same instant the captive made a convulsive effort which freed his hands and he began tearing at the bindings about his penis. Latimer took a step forward, but the young man, Harold, restrained him with a glance. As the final bit of adhesive tore loose with a sickening wrench, the captive leaped forward, towards the boy. He had forgotten about his chains, however, and plummeted to the floor with a

Harold emi own for Latin With this, he this the flaring knob from the grim festures, I am o length into that not involved hir beyond my ex his mentor's as him had Latim they managed thrash about a course, could possibly some tumble.

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"Harold emitted a fearsome gale of laughter and motioned for Latimer to hand him the artificial phallus. With this, he threw himself upon the captive and drove the flaring knob of his device against Mr. Kratides' anus. From the grim expression that spread across the villain's features, I am convinced he would have shoved the entire length into that helpless fundament had the Grecian youth not involved himself in the struggle. With a strength quite beyond my expectations, the young man grappled with his mentor's assailants and would likely have dislodged him had Latimer not intervened. Between the two of them they managed to sequester the boy, who continued to thrash about and struggle within their hold. Kratides, of course, could only lie helpless where he had fallen . . . possibly somewhat stunned by the abrupt impact of his tumble.

"The youth was shouting in Greek, calling down the wrath of heaven upon his antagonists; but none of this availed him. I must confess, Mr. Holmes, that I was so distraught by the entire spectacle I failed to intervene. Had I done so at that particular moment I might have altered the outcome and saved the boy his frightful ordeal. However, by the time I came to my senses enough that I might have acted, the two fiends had secured the young man, belly-down, across the seat of a straight-backed wooden chair. The man called Harold was still holding the phallus, which he now placed against the crevice of the helpless youth's buttocks.

"'You may inform our guest,' he said to me, 'that unless he complies with my request immediately, he will be the instrument which subjects this, his favorite boy, to

a most painful experience.'

"The fellow's intent was obvious, and when Latimer turned Mr. Kratides over so he could see what had transpired, I knew it was hardly necessary to translate Harold's words. The expression on the captive's face was beyond

description, so great was his display of horror. Still, I did as I was bidden, too shaken now to temper my query with a further addition.

"Although twin rivulets of tears were coursing his face, Mr. Kratides shook his head sadly and refused to divulge the required information. I hesitated to translate his words, as I knew it would make me an unwitting accomplice to the impending misery of the youth. Even as I hesitated, however, the motion of the captive's head communicated his intent and Harold drove the phallus downward, slightly penetrating the young man's body so that a frightful, agonized scream rent the air.

"Kratides struggled vainly to raise himself, but with his upper arms still chained against his sides he remained powerless during the course of this satanic rite. Harold jammed the instrument time and again between the upturned buttocks, evoking a series of such dreadful sounds that I clamped both hands against my ears and tried to look away. I was as powerless to do this, however, as was my powerful countryman to lift his body from the floor. And gradually, as the youth's body became accustomed to the fury of his impalement, the cries of misery subsided and were replaced by an almost erotic, wavering groan. This caused a smile to form on Harold's lips, and I heard him mutter something about the thoroughness of Kratides' training. The phallus, however, had thus far been inserted less than half its length.

"I happened, then, to glance upon the prone figure on the floor. Much to my horrified surprise I noted a flaring erection had arisen from his groin. More than this, Kratides' face was contorted into some awesome combination of strained emotion and euphoric desire. A great white bead of moisture formed slowly at the tip of his penis, and as this grew in size its weight began to draw it out into a length of stringy ooze. I remembered, suddenly, that I had been given the reason for this extraordinary reaction, and at the same moment realized the man was not responsible for his seemingly callous

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"By now, the boy had occased to make any sound at all. I am not certain whether he remained conscious to witness his mentor's response to his misery. I know only witness his mentor's response to his misery. I know only that the helpless Kratides was taunted by both tormentors until their every word seemed to call forth a further cascade of milk-white fluid. I was becoming aroused myself, I realized with horror, and was about to attempt concealing the certain evidence of this when Latimer happened to glance in my direction.

"'Melas looks as though he wants to join the festivi-

ties,' said he with a leering grin.

"'By all means!' cried his companion. 'His complicity will assure his silence.'

"I would have bolted up and fled, had there been any place to go. There was not, of course, so I remained as if rooted upon my chair. Latimer beckoned me to him. As I rose to obey, his companion emitted another of his shrill, nerve-shattering shrieks. 'It would be a shame to soil Mr. Melas' finely tailored garb,' said he. 'I would suggest we give him an opportunity to disrobe before we set him to his task'

"Cold with horror, I glanced from the one to the other, but could perceive no sign that either was likely to relent in the slightest. I had no choice, you see, and because I saw no reason to befoul my garments as well as my body, I disrobed. When I stood naked within the circle of flickering illumination, both men watched me for several seconds. Kratides had fallen on his back upon the boards, his eyes closed, and the only sign of life that remained to him was rapid rise and fall of his chest.

"'Clean him up!' growled Latimer.

"'Yes, excellent!' cried his companion shrilly. 'Clean him up, Melas. Quickly, quickly before it cools.'

"I immediately perceived his intent, and despite my ... er, previous experience in such matters, I felt a decided flutter in my stomach. I was aroused, however, as was proclaimed for all to see by the rigid configuration of my own member."

As he recounted this portion of his narrative, Melas looked down at that same portion of his body and smiled self-consciously. Its response at the moment reflected the truth of his statements. The long, serpentine extent of his penis now stood rigidly, rising at an oblique angle above the seat of his chair. Both Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes smiled knowingly, and I noted the latter ran the tip of his

tongue across his lips.

"I went down on my knees and proceeded to lave away the evidences of Mr. Kratides' uncontrollable lust," continued Mr. Melas, "and finding the task more agreeable than I might have anticipated I had ceased to follow the motions of the two fiends, Harold and Latimer. It was only when I felt the warmth of the latter's loins against my upraised posterior that I realized I was scheduled for some additional usage. Latimer's hands grasped roughly against me, fitting neatly into the concave arch of my body. He had removed his shirt, trousers and undergarments, so his naked flesh burned on mine and the swollen expanse of his sex projected hard between my thighs. The thrusting might of this collided repeatedly with my scrotum, as he went through the motions of intercourse without actually penetrating my posterior.

"But I was not to be denied this final display of his ascendancy. Of a sudden, I felt him retreat several inches, allowing a rush of cooler atmosphere to caress my skin as the warmth of his contact was withdrawn. One long, probing finger then slipped along the crack between my cheeks, and a moment later it penetrated with a thrusting force that made me shriek and plunge forward, atop the bound, unmoving figure of their captive. The youth was moaning, again, still tied across the chair, and Harold

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hovered somewhere in the background, just outside my

field of vision. "'Please,' I begged in trembling fear. I would have said more, but the agonized spasms of wretchedness were making me twist and writhe atop their other victim, and the pain almost blunted my every sensual response.

"'Please,' mocked Latimer. 'Who ever heard of a Greek who didn't enjoy a bit of buggery? Eh, Harold?' he laughed.

"'Get on with it,' came his companion's breathy

rasp. "In a flash, the finger was withdraw and in its place I felt the frightful pressure of Latimer's swollen bulk. I had already surmised its size by the previous motions of its passage between my legs. Now I had occasion to feel its total power as the man rammed himself against me and forced the great, huge knob within the grip of my helpless sphincter. I nearly expired in those moments, clinging tightly to the warmth of the body beneath me, gritting my teeth against the pain and trying to force my resisting body to relax. Being the recipient in an act of anal intercourse was no more new to me than any other aspect of homosexual relations; but the suddenness and the brutality of my present circumstances were quite far afield from anything I had previously known.

"Then Latimer had his cock completely imbedded, and I felt as if impaled by a blazing firebrand. For several minutes my mind was in such a state of agonized withdrawal I hardly retained a perception of my surroundings. As if from far away, I heard a frightful scream, and on later reflection realized that the phallic cudgel must have been driven fully into the young man's fundament. But my own circumstances precluded any greater concern for my fellow helot. I was aware, suddenly, of Latimer's body enclosing mine, of the fierce pressure as his powerful arms wrapped themselves around me, and then of the gradual lessening of pain as my body began to accustom

itself to his penetration.

"As I emerged from this web of misery, it was like breaking the surface of a pond after some deep dive through its murky depths. Latimer's loins were grinding furiously against my unprotected backside, grating against my skin with an abrasive insistence that now overcame whatever residual waves of pain his prick produced in. side me. In fact, I felt the searing wretchedness mellowing towards pleasant heat and a delightful sensation of full. ness. I was conscious, again, of the supple form beneath me, and with the passing of my own discomfort I was more able to appreciate its voluptuous attractions. My own member had risen to a desperate rigidity, and now wedged its length between the other's thighs.

"'Fuck him!' came Latimer's harsh whisper in my ear. He lunged fiercely against me and increased the pressure of his arms. 'Fuck him!' he repeated, and the warm rush of his breath through the auditory canal served to finalize and reestablish my suspended passions.

"With some effort, I was able to slip one hand between my own loins and those of the stolid, unprotesting prisoner beneath me. I grasped my straining prick and lifted my arse as I attempted to press my cockhead against the puckered opening which my fingers had managed to locate. I could hear Kratides groan when Latimer forced his legs to bend upward, thus exposing his anus to my assault. To enter him without benefit of lubricant, however, was something I almost feared to try." Mr. Melas smiled self-consciously at the three of us, and glanced down at his lengthy member. This had responded to the tale by achieving a degree of stiffness that lifted its bulbous head from the posture of its former sagging lassitude.

"Go on," urged Mycroft Holmes. "Your reticence is

well explained and certainly justified."

"Well, Mr. Holmes," continued Melas, "it was apparent this Latimer intended I should do exactly what my conscience demurred, and to emphasize his demand he raised his loins and pummelled me afresh. The motion of

his driving I could see W. Kratides. I had ends but there was also a qui his being able to retain sponse, considering the hort while before. But a powerful one. It was a smile of delighted ple continued surprise he li "By now, I was q peculiar circumstances warm and gratifying springy length of exqui was imbedded in such hardly restrain my clin feared to abuse was ex of what I did. My hea senses reeled as if I has carousel. Each time my countryman, I for ment. Oh, gentlemen, the memory banishe swathed in warm, h against it, filled with

Mr. Melas would for some time longer posture of his penis the pleasant effect hi tions. However, Mycr sudden snap of his fi back to his proper you in that house is basement of this bui cerns us at the mon parture and subsequ he man Harold."

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his driving cock so enflamed me, I repeated the motion on Mr. Kratides. I could see his pain was at least the equal Mr. Kratides. I had endured in the preceding moments; to that which I had endured in the preceding moments; but there was also a quicker recovery. I was amazed at his being able to retain such a high level of sensual response, considering the quantity of his discharge such a sponse, considering the aphrodisiac must have been a powerful one. It was barely a second or two later that a smile of delighted pleasure curled his lips, and to my continued surprise he lifted his face to kiss me.

"By now, I was quite beyond any concern for the peculiar circumstances of my involvement. I lay with a warm and gratifying weight upon my backside, and a springy length of exquisite cock within me. My own shaft was imbedded in such grasping, heated blackness I could hardly restrain my climax. And now the man whom I had feared to abuse was expressing his pleasurable acceptance of what I did. My head was fairly spinning, and all my senses reeled as if I had suddenly fallen from a speeding carousel. Each time I raised my hips to pump against my countryman, I forced an increase of my own impalement. Oh, gentlemen, it was such sublime ecstasy I find the memory banishes all negatives! I was veritably swathed in warm, hard flesh, crushed beneath it and against it, filled with it and absorbed inside its pit!"

Mr. Melas would likely have continued his ravings for some time longer, and judging by the flaring, erect posture of his penis he was not in the least overstating the pleasant effect his reminiscences had upon his emotions. However, Mycroft Holmes, with a stern glower and sudden snap of his fingers, brought the enraptured Greek back to his proper time and place. "What happened to you in that house is as nothing to what awaits you in the basement of this building," said he sharply. "What concerns us at the moment is the circumstance of your departure and subsequent conversations with Latimer and the man Harold."

"Yes, sir!" replied Mr. Melas. His entire body tight-

ened and he sat upright in his chair. He reminded me of a soldier snapping to attention before his sergeant. But I noticed this refocussing of cognitive processes had no effect whatever on the rigid projection of his manhood. If anything, his stiffened bearing was further reflected by the condition of his prick. And, I might also record, the references to his own potency were not exaggerated. His was a truly splendid organ!

"When they finished with me," Mr. Melas continued wistfully, "the two men pounced on Kratides and quickly bound his wrists together, once more, behind his back Harold took up a roll of adhesive plaster and quickly wrapped that glorious member in several thicknesses of the stuff. Without bothering to dress-for he, too, had disrobed in the course of our exchanges-he conducted both the boy and the prisoner from the room. I looked at Latimer in some confusion, having no idea what he might do. But instead of the violence I half expected he might offer me, he grinned and walked to his collection of clothing. He fumbled in his trouser pockets and produced a small stack of coins. 'There are five sovereigns here,' said he, handing them to me, 'which will, I hope, be a sufficient fee. But remember,' he added, tapping the naked skin of my chest, 'if you speak to a human soul about this -one human soul, mind-well, may God have mercy upon your arse!'

"I cannot tell you the horror with which this man inspired me. I could see him better now as the lamplight shone upon him, and I realized why his use of me had been so painful. Even in its softened state, his penis must have been five inches through its center, though I doubt its length would be considered extraordinary. Still, after his manner of use, it was—"

"We are not presently concerned with the size of potency of Mr. Latimer," came the stern rejoinder from Mycroft Holmes. "Merely tell us what happened next."

"Without girding himself more than to shove his feet into a pair of walking boots, Latimer grabbed me by the

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shoulder and propelled me across the room. I still had shoulder and property of the carriage of the c I could finish dressing in the carriage. From this, I expected he would remain at the house whilst I was driven back into the city. Much to my continued amazement, he climbed into the coach behind me, and sat in perfect ease as the driver whipped up the horses and we started rattling back towards London. Frightfully flustered, I squirmed and wriggled back into my clothes and attempted to sit facing the nude, attractive man without displaying

my consternation. "Of course, I could not, and long before we reached the appointed destination he eyed me coldly, and told me I might fondle him if I wished. He said it as if he were granting permission to me for some act over which he was completely indifferent. I was sorely tempted to ignore his invitation, but the sight of that heavy, succulent member soon rendered me helpless. I was on my knees on the floor of the jouncing carriage, sucking the length of it, still, when the driver suddenly halted the vehicle and I was thrown backward against the seat.

"'You will get down here, Mr. Melas,' spoke Latimer coldly, and though his cock held rigid and ready between his thighs, he gave no indication that I might finish what I had started. Instead, with no apparent concern for who might be standing outside the opaque windows of the carriage, he reached across and flung open the door.

"Still in a state of bewildered amazement, I stepped down and had hardly time to spring away before the coachman lashed the horse and the carriage rattled away. I looked around me in sustained astonishment. I was on some sort of a heathy common mottled over with dark clumps of furze-bushes. Far away stretched a line of houses, with a light here and there in the upper windows. On the other side I saw the red signal lamps of a railway.

"The carriage which had brought me was already out of sight. I stood gazing around and wondering where on earth I might be. The only evidence remaining to as-

sure me the entire experience had not been a dream was the salty taste of Latimer's semen on my tongue. On in. quiry, I discovered I was on Wandsworth Common, and must walk the mile or so to Clapham Junction in order to be in time for the last train to Victoria.

"So that was the end of my adventure, Mr. Holmes." he added with a glance at my friend. "I do not know where I was, nor whom I spoke with, nor anything save what I have told you. But I know that there is foul play going on, and I want to help that glorious, unfortunate pair! I told the whole story to Mr. Mycroft Holmes," he said, averting his eyes in respectful acknowledgement of his master's status, "but I fear there is no way I can communicate this intelligence to the police without exposing my . . . er, my somewhat questionable behaviour."

"I did not find your behaviour questionable in the least!" said Mycroft Holmes, sharply. His voice seemed to crackle like thunder across the room, and his eyes blazed with an unexpected fury. His hand was already reaching for the bell cord, when he turned his gaze upon his brother. "Have you anything else to ask Mr. Melas, Sherlock?"

My friend remained silent and thoughtful for several moments. "No," he replied. "I think Mr. Melas has given us quite a thorough account of his adventure. I might only suggest that he take care not to fall into the hands of these people until we have an opportunity . . ."

"He is quite safe where he is!" replied Mycroft. And with this he gave the cord a vicious yank, which brought both the youthful attendants running to our door. "Take this slave back to his cell," said the elder Holmes, and after the three of them had departed he added: "Nothing displeases me so completely as to hear a man describe his sexual pursuits as 'questionable'. Man will do as his psyche directs him, and whatever his Creator has placed within him is as natural for that particular individual . . . But I digress." He sat down again, and when

he continued What think you. What steps Mycroft pick on the sidetable. "Anybody sa abouts of a Gree Athens, who is u d similar reward a Greek youth X 2473. "That was i "How abou "I have inc "A wire to I asked. "Sherlock croft, turning t means and let I

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he continued it was in a more calm, modulated tone. "What think you, Sherlock?"

"What steps have you taken?" he asked.

Mycroft picked up the Daily News, which was lying

on the sidetable.

"Anybody supplying any information as to the whereabouts of a Greek gentleman named Paul Kratides, from Athens, who is unable to speak English, will be rewarded. A similar reward paid to anyone giving information about a Greek youth known to be associated with Kratides. X 2473.

"That was in all the dailies," he added. "No answer."

"How about the Greek Legation?"

"I have inquired. They know nothing."

"A wire to the head of the Athens police, then?" I asked.

"Sherlock has all the energy of the family," said Mycroft, turning to me. "Well, you take the case up by all

means and let me know if you do any good."

"Certainly," answered my friend, rising from his chair. "I'll let you know, and in the meantime I trust you will keep Mr. Melas safe from harm. By these advertisements they must, of course, know that he has betrayed them."

A chilling grin spread across the features of Mycroft Holmes. "Mr. Melas will be beyond their reach for some little time," said he, "though I must remind you of our rules." This last was rendered in a more serious, almost ominous tone. "We may not retain him beyond the extent of his willingness. Tomorrow, then, should he request it, he may leave the safety of these premises."

"Judging by his obvious delight at the very prospect of your offerings," replied my friend, "I should think it

not too difficult a task to persuade him to remain." Again, his brother smiled. "We shall do our best,"

"And should Mr. Melas decide to leave despite your said he. . . . er, injunctions, you will inform me?"

"Certainly," said Mycroft Holmes.

We departed on the most casual note, shaking hands in the inner hall, again with the demeanour of three gen. tlemen in some proper salon. After the outer door had closed behind us, and we were strolling through the Pall Mall, Holmes turned to smile at me. "Well, Watson," he asked with a twinkle in his eye, "what thought you of the Diogenes Club?"

"Extraordinary!" said I.

I had spent a sleepless night, at first tossing restlessly in the bed while I waited for Holmes to join me. After the vivid descriptions by Mr. Melas and the things I had seen at Mycroft's club, my body was so aflame it was all I could do to keep from calling out to my friend. He had stopped at the telegraph office on the way home, and sent several wires. Now, I could hear him moving about the sitting room, but I was loath to distract him as I knew he must be deep in thought. I expected at any moment to hear the scratchy tones of his fiddle, but this, at least, I was spared. I had about given up hope of his joining me, and, in fact, had stripped back the covers and gripped my rigid member with the intention of satisfying the most immediate cravings of my flesh, when Holmes ambled abruptly into the bedroom.

Even as he stood silhouetted in the doorway, the soft light from the table lamps streaming in behind him, I knew something was amiss. He had completely stripped himself, and posed as he was with his hands gripping the doorframe and his hard, rangy body mostly obscured by the darkness, it was obvious he had injected himself with one of his opiates.

"Holmes!" I cried sharply. It was on the tip of my tongue to remonstrate with him over this abuse of his health, but by now I had learned it was useless to try. Instead, I fell silent and watched with growing apprehension as he slowly approached the bed.

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With that, he threw himself upon me, causing the bed frame to squeak and groan from the sudden descent of his body. I had been wearing a linen nightshift, which his body. I had been wearing a linen nightshift, which he ripped off me with a single flick of his wrist. "Ah, I he ripped off me with a single flick of his wrist. "Ah, I see you were ready for me, Watson!" he rumbled. His see you were ready for me, Watson!" he rumbled. His lips dropped about my swollen plum, and I hardly had time to draw breath before he had slid to the base and was trying to suck my bollicks in as well. His head was twisting back and forth, and his frenetic motions were threatening to devour me. He was completely out of touch with any normal reality, I soon realized, but the cause for my friend's distraction—and, in fact, for his sudden and unexpected use of narcotics—escaped me.

For the moment, it was enough that he had come to me, and that my sexual urges were requited. It was one of the few times, however, that we came together without preamble and without an expression of the deep attachment which bound us one to the other. I felt the searing heat and the ferocious, demanding pressure as he took me deep within him and continued to strive for a total possession. Under ordinary circumstances, I am sure the task would have been beyond him. My cock was not so small as to be easily absorbed, even by itself. Now, it was lodged clear to his hals and Holmes had swung his body around so that his tongue was in a position to extend below his lips and begin working my scrotum into the seething pit, as well.

I could only lie back and let him do as he would. My senses were bludgeoned by this cascade of stimuli, and in my heightened state of arousal the enveloping feel of him was beyond response or description. I could see the shadowy form driving against my groin, and sense the long, grasping tongue as it gradually gathered the contents of my sac towards his straining lips. When both orbs lay just without, Holmes executed some seemingly impossible manoeuvre and enclosed them. I was now com-

pletely possessed by him, held hard upon the bed by the weight of his upper body against my thighs and the pressure of his hands on my midsection. My own control was slipping fast away. I found myself twisting and moaning, fighting the impulse to place my palms against his head and force him off me. The sensation was undeniably glorious; yet it bordered on the threshold of the unendurable.

I had been so aroused before Holmes came to me, it was only a short space of time before his violent usage brought me off. With a lunging thrust of my hips, I released a stream of fluid that poured into him with a violence to match his own. I could feel his membranes stretch and the motion of his epiglottis as he somehow swallowed the heavy discharge. Yet, still he held me, retained my total manhood as I gradually descended from the heights to which he had driven me. Because, I suppose, of the extensive exchange we had enjoyed before leaving our rooms that evening, I felt my prick begin to soften, and I expected this would terminate our present interaction.

Instead, my friend remained with his face pressed firmly to the mat of my pubis and the whole of my genitals ensconced within his grasp. His long, tapered fingers traced their patterns in slow, deliberate motions across the hard-flexed ridges of my belly, and his tongue now executed another impossible contortion within his mouth to permit its playing across the hypersensitive tip of my cock.

"Holmes!" I whispered at length. "I . . . I can't.
. . . Holmes!"

His motions never ceased, never slowed. The only change was the cadence of his roving fingers. One hand flattened against my waist, while the other set up a drumming rhythm upon the center of my stomach. It required a moment or two for me to realize he was communicating with me, using the standard telegraphers' code because he was unable to speak without relinquishing his hold upon me.

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It res comrs' code hing his "Hard," he tapped in Morse. "Grow hard and use me

As my brain deciphered his message, the words seemed to swell and to assume a beat that coordinated with the throbbing pulse at my temple and the heavy thunder of my heart. He was willing me to recover and asking that I sodomize him. This was rare, for I was usually the recipient.

Yet the thought intrigued me, and the prospect lent strength to my flaccid tissues. I was already growing hard

when I came to a second realization.

For several seconds, Holmes had continued to beat his plea upon my abdomen; but after this, he had tapped out a series of meaningless letters and syllables by which I assumed he had lapsed into some reverie, possibly drumming the tempo of a verse or piece of music that happened through his opium-clouded brain. I had almost drifted out of contact with him, when it occurred to me he was no longer attempting to communicate. Rather he expressed a segment of the myriad, drug-twisted thoughts that coursed his brain. "Moriarty," he wrote in code. "Professor James Moriarty."

"Moriarty!" I exclaimed. "You don't mean . . ."

"Precisely, my dear fellow," came the response. "That fiend is behind it all."

I might have questioned him further, but I could feel the pressure against my testicles as my shaft rose fully into the constricted passage of his throat. Holmes, of course, felt it too. With another inexplicable widening of his orifice, he freed himself and stretched the length of his body beside me on the bed. My hand fell immediately upon his groin, and my fingers quickly apprised me of the truth. His lengthy column was warm and bloated to the touch, but its mass hung limp and impotent across his thigh. The drugs! thought I, but I made no mention of the matter. Rather, I bolted upright onto my knees, and quickly manoeuvred his recumbent form face-down in the center of the bed. Other than a groan which could

have been an expression of either fatigue or euphoric expectation, Holmes made no response; nor did he attempt to help me. Like a warm, dead weight, he allowed me to do precisely as I would, but moved not a toe or finger to determine the course of my action.

Once he was prone and flat across the mattress, I reached into the bedside stand and extracted a jar of creme. With this I coated my own member and the separation between Holmes' buttocks. I reached down, then, seized his cock and bollicks, and massaged the scented lubricant upon them as well. I had hoped to thus engender some response, but the entire heavy mass responded not at all. My own lance was almost painfully erect, however. and the moment was not far off when I knew I must use it or go completely mad. I grasped the taut, rounded cheeks and worked the slickness across them. I drove my fingers deep inside the cleft and probed the tight-clamped orifice. depressed it and felt the muscles contract to hold me out. I forced one finger into him, heard him groan again, and paused to survey the serene beauty of his body in repose.

The only light came through the half-open doorway, fell softly across the hard planes of his back and arse to make them glow like some unearthly spectre in the shadowy darkness. From the phenomenal width of his shoulders, my friend's body tapered in a long, graceful arch toward the tiny span of waist. All across his posterior portions, the muscle tone forced its imprint upon the satin skin. Each sinew stood in firm definition, each strand of opposing muscle clearly delineated as a singular symbol of his strength. Even the small, supple spheres of his buttocks were adjuncts to a physical beauty that so overwhelmed me, I could not restrain the need to fondle and caress each and every portion of his being.

Slowly, then, with a deliberately tantalizing restraint, I played the game he'd played with me. I dipped my fingers in the sweetly scented creme and I spread this thickly across his flesh. I felt raw power trembling beneath my touch. It was the summation of energies, expressed by his neural responses as I kneaded every hardened round of

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muscular symmetry. But other than these subtle reactions and his occasional moans, Holmes remained inert, as if

on the verge of sleep.

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By now, my jutting penis had achieved a tumefaction that threatened to burst its sheath. Already, the gleaming, lubricated surface was stretched beyond any normal capacity. I almost feared to touch it, lest I trigger its hardpent energies. I therefore knelt as I was between his thighs, left off my cloying possession and tried to quiet my own responses by a further, silent observation of his body. But this held little by way of relief. Coated now as it was with the viscous creme, it showed its lines and contours with a still more compelling clarity. All along the deep trench that marked his spine, the gleaming oil created a scene of splendour. I might have been gazing at some mountain defile, with snow-capped ridges rising in majestic pride along the path of a lengthy chasm-a river whose deep path lay concealed in shadow.

I could restrain myself no longer. I chanced the pressure of my fingers to depress the cockhead and place it directly above his hidden opening. I eased downward with my loins, and sensed the ecstasy of surrounding flesh. I touched the lips of his anus and pressed with just sufficient strength to lodge the tip of my shaft within its grip. Holmes groaned, again, and his body shook more violently than before. But his flesh now burned with expectant desire. I could feel it, though he never spoke, and I knew no unwillingness or lack of arousal would thwart me.

I spread myself across him, being careful to maintain the elevation of my hips so as not to penetrate his anus until I was ready to do so. I slid easily upon his broad expanse of back, at which I found myself responding to another, unaccustomed thrill of physical bliss. The oil that coated him formed a slippery film between us, at once allowing our bodies to achieve a seemingly closer contact, but permitting an ease of mobility I would never have suspected. My mounting excitement was immediately communicated to the lower portions of my body, and before I half realized what I was about, I had driven my loins

hard against his underside. Holmes emitted such a long guttural moan it all but persuaded me I must have caused him some injury. But, as before, he made no move nor did he express any verbal protest to dissuade me. The frenzied sensations into which my flesh now projected itself soon immured my mind as well. I slid my arms be neath his chest and drove myself with long, smooth strokes against him.

The sliding motion of his buttocks beneath me, the thrilling pressure of my loins upon the hard, responding surfaces were exciting me almost as much as the furnace heat and pressures that grasped my shaft. I was nearly delirious with joy and physical bliss. Each time I moved, I could feel the firmness of my own body gliding on his, separated, yet tightly joined by the exquisite sensation of the lubricating layer. At length, my passions rose still higher, and I drove with ever-increasing force against his arse. I found I was fucking him with a near-bestial determination that could well have rent asunder a more delicate constitution. But Holmes was able to absorb it. He remained loose and yielding within my embrace, allowing his body to be buffeted about by the greater violence of my usage.

And with his unique, perceptive abilities, he sensed the precise moment when my passions had reached the boiling point, and when my bollicks had drawn tightly against the underside of cock. "Give it to me, Watson!" he muttered. "Let your seed flow into me! Now!" he gasped. "Now!" And in that split second of time my senses were bound up in the holocaust of sensual lust. I neither heard nor saw nor felt any stimulus beyond the immediacy of Holmes' being and my own. I delivered a final, desperate thrust that drove me to a depth that must have touched his very soul, and I held as the seething flood rushed into him.

"Moriarty," said I. "What has he to do with all this?" Holmes regarded me across the breakfast table, his eres bright as renity. He seem sleep. It amazes haggard, deples plainly upon my
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eyes bright as ever, and his features set in peaceful seeyes bright to peaceful se-renity. He seemed not the least affected by his lack of renity. He seed me that he was able to rise above the sleep. It amade above the haggard, depleted fatigue which must have shown so plainly upon my own face and body.

"An answer arrived this morning to one of my telegrams," he said casually. "It came while you were in the bath," he added in answer to my look of surprise. "The message confirms my earlier suspicions. Our Mr. Kratides is the descendant of a long line of ancient kings, though his family was deprived of their ancestral holdings many centuries ago. Now, through his own industry and perseverance, Kratides has been able to reclaim a portion of these fabled estates. In fact, he has purchased an entire island-rumoured to be in some archipelago not far from Lesbos. Here, he has established the most marvellous gentleman's retreat ever conceived. He has stocked the place with several dozen of the world's most exquisite youths, and for a simply enormous fee-one which would discourage any but the most fabulously wealthy-Mr. Kratides will permit visitors."

"Then, if others have been there," asked I, incredu-

lous, "how is it Moriarty is unable to . . . ?"

"Moriarty!" exclaimed Holmes. "My dear, have you developed some psychic ability of which I am unaware? How did you ever know I . . ." He broke off suddenly with a knowing smile. "Ah yes, the cocaine and the marriage couch. A certain combination to render a man off his guard and to permit the wife access to his most secret thoughts."

"Humph! I was hardly the wife last night!" I remarked.

"Quite so, quite so," he said, brusquely. "Be that as it may, I think there is little point in keeping the full spectrum of my conjectures from you. No, Watson, despite Mr. Kratides' permitting visitors, the location of his island has been kept confidential. This was accomplished by the simple expedient of bringing each guest by some

different, roundabout route, traveling by boat, of course, and ensuring the man remain locked inside a well-ap. pointed cabin that contained no porthole or other open. ing. While a few men on this earth might read the stars or otherwise determine his position by navigational means once on the island, there have been none who have thus far succeeded in doing so."

"But why Moriarty?" I asked. "What possible use could this master criminal have for such a retreat, other

than to use it, possibly, as a place of refuge?"

"That is it, precisely!" exclaimed Holmes. "It would be the ultimate achievement of his life to obtain mastery of such a Utopia. He would then be in a position to demand the most outrageous concession from any person who wished to visit there. And believe me, Watson, there are many men high in the financial and governmental hierarchies who would sacrifice much by way of material goods, even honour, to spend a few weeks on that paradise of the Aegean."

"Then he must be stopped!" said I.

"Yes, he must," agreed Sherlock Holmes.

When Mrs. Hudson came to clear the breakfast dishes, Holmes stopped her and asked several peculiar questions. As I listened, I realized that my friend had determined to seek out the house and its occupants by means of tracing the youth's activities, rather than those of Mr. Kratides.

"... then in your experience," he was saying to our landlady, "you feel it most likely a boy in such a distracted state of mind, fleeing from a difficult affair of the heart, and landing by himself on English shores, would most likely seek employment at the Roaring Bitch over all the others?"

"Oh, certainly, Mr. Holmes. Why, the Bitch has a reputation which extends far beyond these shores. Besides, it is situated where one can hardly miss it, whereas the others are mostly hidden behind facades of respectability or in Limehouse, where a boy of your description would take his very life in his hands to venture alone."

Thank you. Miles he added: try to s appear more profitable has a had a had goft, And nothing ha we must assume the be he was the more likely length of time. I would bonds existed between mutual love, possibly another became une reason, he fled the is "Now, if we fol assume that Kratides lad's welfare, loved the rest of my reaso the other facts we say the boy was ter not demonstrably 1 spair, the young m tides realize the der boy-either for lov lad before he coul However, we may basis of the behavi

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tch has a hores. Beit, wheresi of respect description "Thank you, Mrs. Hudson," said he. Turning to face

me, he added: "Now, Watson, our quest begins." he added.
"But why try to trail the boy?" I asked. "It would appear more profitable to ask after Mr. Kratides."

"Ah, but that has already been done . . . by Mycroft. And nothing has come of it. No, Watson, I think we must assume the boy came to England first. Of the two we must all the two he was the more likely to have remained at large for any length of time. I would suspect that some strong emotional bonds existed between himself and Kratides—perhaps a mutual love, possibly a one-sided affair which one way or another became unendurable to the boy. For whatever reason, he fled the island and eventually came to London.

"Now, if we follow this line of logic, we must also assume that Kratides was very much concerned about the lad's welfare, loved him maybe, which would fit well with the rest of my reasoning. Be this as it may, adding up all the other facts we have, I should think it fairly safe to say the boy was terribly in love with his master, who did not demonstrably return that love. In a moment of despair, the young man fled. Only then, perhaps, did Kratides realize the depths of his regard. He set out after the boy-either for love or because he wished to silence the lad before he could divulge the location of the island. However, we may reject this latter supposition on the basis of the behaviour and conversations reported by Mr. Melas.

"So, what have we? A young man of obvious physical beauty and highly developed talents arriving on our shores, bereft of friends and funds. He must seek employment to sustain his existence, and he therefore goes to the most logical source of such employment—a male brothel. While there, his previous activities are uncovered by the managers, who, you may be sure, are in one way or another connected with Moriarty. His syndicate is into all of these types of businesses.

"Having discovered the identity of the boy, Moriarty orders him seized, thinking, no doubt, that it will be an easy matter to learn the location of the island from him.

Either the boy isn't certain, himself, or he somehow man ages to convince his captors of his inability to find the place. He has not been abused, you see, as we must again deduce from Mr. Melas' account of his condition a few days ago.

"Convinced, finally, that the lad does not possess the information he requires, the professor sets out on another tack. By now he has learned of Kratides' desperate search for his boy. Moriarty lets the information reach Kratides that the young man has been seen in London. As soon as the unwary gentleman steps off the packet boat, he is seized by Moriarty's men and taken to that house for questioning. This would explain a Greek of such wealth and influence coming into this country, yet being unknown at the legation."

"Extraordinary!" I said.

"Elementary, my dear Watson," said he.

"So, now we got to the Roaring Bitch?" I was somewhat hesitant in asking; like nearly everyone else in London I had heard of this infamous place, but never set foot inside it. In truth, I was loath to do so even now, when one—possibly two—lives were held in the balance.

"I think not," said Holmes, after another moment's reflexion. "I am certain the place is controlled by Moriarty's henchmen. Were we to appear there as ourselves the word would no doubt reach the Professor before we could possibly learn the location of that house. No, Watson, I must go alone . . . and in disguise."

Though disappointed to be excluded from this adventure, I must confess to a certain sense of relief at being spared the necessity of entering such a place. Holmes stripped off his waistcoat and shirt, then maintained a running chatter as he proceeded to apply a most hideous quantity of paint and powder to his face. "It is yet early," he remarked, "and I shall be there in the forenoon, I hope before any great influx of customers arrives for the midday entertainment. You must remain here, old fellow, and keep watch for any messages that may arrive during my

sheence. If you d unce, you must already instructed "Do not en rather give him rest assured he w in this, as in so quite outshines h He prattled rashly or on my contact Gregson story to him, I would soon requ When he final Holmes kept his room where he wardrobe. I ha brushed past m instead of the r the most effemi flouncing out of

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already instructed "Do not entrust anything to him in writing, but "Do not entrust anything to him in writing, but rather give him your communication verbally. You may rest assured he will deliver it verbatim. I have trained him rest assured he will deliver it verbatim. I have trained him in this, as in some of his other skills, and his intellect quite outshines his tattered raiment. . . "

He prattled on after this, cautioning me not to act rashly or on my own, and if I saw no other way out to contact Gregson at the Yard. I could entrust Mr. Melas' story to him, Holmes assured me, as the time factors would soon require our contacting the police in any event. When he finally completed his handiwork, Sherlock Holmes kept his back to me and went into the spare bedroom where he kept his collection of disguises in the wardrobe. I had caught only a fleeting glimpse as he brushed past me; hence my surprise was complete when, instead of the manly adventurer I knew my friend to be, the most effeminate, mincing fairie I had ever seen came flouncing out of the room.

"Well, dear boy, what do you think?" cried the grotesque parody.

"I have never seen anything so revolting in all my life!" I muttered. And, indeed, I had not. Surrounding the face with its layers of powder, rouge and artificial lashes, was an enormous wig of brassy blond curls. Under a gold lamé waistcoat, he wore a sky blue shirt, woven through with silver threads. At the throat was a gathering of fluffy pink lace, and his colour was repeated in the tight-fitting breeches which displayed his genitals in a most singularly vulgar manner. Adding the final touch to this thoroughly outrageous costume, his enormous feet were shoved into a pair of high-heeled boots that seemed to be covered in some sort of gold leaf.

"I can see by your expression that I am quite properly attired," said Holmes in a fluttering voice.

"All you require is a fan," I remarked sharply.

"Oh, my! I almost forgot!" And with that, I'm damned if he did not produce a fine, Belgian lace folding. fan, which he coquettishly flicked before his face.

"You'll be arrested before you've gone two steps,"

"Oh, no; no my dear!" And with that Sherlock Holmes fairly floated out of the door and descended the stairs amidst the clickety-clack of his pointed heels. He had left the portal ajar, and as I went to close it I could hear Mrs. Hudson's voice. "Oh, you look positively ray. ishing, Mr. Holmes!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Hudson," came the shrieking trill.
"I can hardly wait to be seen at the Bitch!"

I heard the downstairs door close behind him, and a muted giggle as our landlady retired to her rooms. I was certain the next I would hear from my friend would come via some solicitor who had been employed to obtain his release from prison. In many ways, I think, this might have been preferable to what actually transpired, for the end result was nearly disastrous to our relationship. What I had not yet realized was how deeply Holmes would be affected by this experience of dress and association.

My friend had departed at a few minutes before eleven o'clock. Shortly after noon, a messenger brought a communication from Mycroft Holmes. "I enclose an answer received this morning to my advertisement," he wrote, "and I am also compelled to inform you that Mr. Melas departed our premises a short while ago. Following a delightful evening of revelry, our guest insisted his constitution could not withstand . . . etc."

This was disturbing intelligence, indeed; and the urgency to pass it on to Holmes was furthered by the second note enclosed in Mycroft's letter. Written in a somewhat shaky hand on royal cream paper, the message read: "Sir—In answer to your advertisement of today's date, I beg to inform you that I know the young man in question very well. 'Intimately' might be the better term.

If you should care to particulars as to hi form you that he h lodgings at The My establishment where Beckenham, th house described by And if I were to as the lad he sought ently visiting. I he upon the roadway his fellow street A carriages and oth conscientious, ho front door every t came running at 1

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If you should care to call upon me I could give you some particulars as to his painful history; however, I can inform you that he has been removed from his temporary form you that Myrtles, Beckenham, and returned to the lodgings at The Myrtles, Beckenham, and returned to the establishment where first I met him. Yours faithfully, etc."

Beckenham, then, must have been the location of the

Beckenham, then, must have been the focation of the house described by Mr. Melas. This much was obvious. And if I were to assume Holmes' deductions were correct, the lad he sought was now in the very place he was presently visiting. I hurried to the window and looked down upon the roadway, where young Wiggins and several of his fellow street Arabs were cavorting about between the carriages and other traffic. He was a faithful lad, and conscientious, however, and kept looking towards our front door every few minutes. He saw me leaning out and came running at my signal.

Wiggins clattered up the stairs and I carefully imparted the two items of information to him, requiring that he repeat them back to be certain he understood. Then he was off, and I sat back to await the next scene of our unfolding drama. I had instructed Wiggins to return directly he had delivered my intelligence to Sherlock Holmes. The entire task should have taken less than an hour.

When the lad had not returned by one-thirty, I began to grow restless, and when I heard the tower clock strike two I knew something was amiss. I grabbed up my coat and stick, then thought to take my service revolver as well. I rushed down the stairs and out into the street. I hailed a hansom cab at the corner, and without thinking I gave the address of the Roaring Bitch to the driver. The man's eyebrows shot up, and for a moment I feared that he was going to refuse to take me. But with a sigh of resignation he nodded. "Very good, sir," said he.

As we were halfway to our destination, I spied young Wiggins, limping slowly along the curb, headed in the direction of Baker Street. "Stop!" I cried to the driver, and tapped the back of his seat with my stick. He halted

in the middle of the traffic, and I called to Wiggins amidst the shouts and curses of the several people who had been forced to stop behind us. Wiggins hobbled to the cab and I told him to get in, urging the driver forward at the same time. As the cab lurched into motion, Wiggins knelt on the floor beside my feet.

"Why don't you sit down?" I asked. "There is no

need for ceremony between us."

"I . . . I can't, sir," replied the lad weakly. "It's . . . it's me . . . me arsehole, sir, if you'll pardon . . "

"Tut, tut, my lad," said I. "Surely you need not be concerned over offending me with your vernacular! But tell me what happened, and don't be afraid to say it right out."

"Well, sir," he began, "I takes yer message like yer tells me, and I goes to the door and I asks fer Mr. 'Olmes. I 'arf expected the old woman wot answers the door would bounce me out on me arse. Instead, she asks me in, and I steps inside the dark, not able ter see from the brightness outside. First, some bloke grabs me and another cove pulls down me pants, and I tries to yell. But the music gets louder and louder, and . . . "

"Did you get the message to Mr. Holmes?" I demanded.

"That I did not, sir!" said Wiggins. "I was lucky to get away with me prick and me bollicks still a part'a me!"

Hastily, I scribbled a note to Gregson and dispatched this with Wiggins when my cab pulled up before the Roaring Bitch. I paid the driver, and taking a deep breath of air I opened the door and stepped inside. True to Wiggins' statement, the interior seemed black as pitch, and coming from the bright sunlight I was temporarily blinded. I felt a large, hairy hand slip into mine and I was led forward, toward a heavy velvet drapery. As l moved, other hands grazed my loins and thighs, while still another attempted to pull the timepiece from my waistcoat pocket. I snapped the unseen knuckles with my stick, and once through the opening in the drape I was

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ered in folds, tied back with golden cords as thick as the mooring lines on a ship. All manner of mirrors covered the ceiling and any portion of the wall not already hung with fabric. All of this gave the effect of one's being in an enormous vault, while actually the place was relatively small. The music came from an ill-assorted group of people, who at first glance appeared to be of varied gender. All were decked in brilliant clothing, which seemed to glow in the semidarkness. That all were male—at least in the strictly physical sense—soon became apparent in the course of their performance. Each individual executed his own vulgar routine, at the end of which he inevitably stood naked in the centre of the floor.

But the performers and the other employees who fluttered about the tables were no more ribald than my fellow guests. Had I known what sort of creatures inhabited this den of iniquity, I would not have been nearly so disturbed by the costume I had seen on Holmes. There must have been fifty-five or sixty men in the room, not one of whom was any more tastefully attired than my

friend had been when last I saw him.

As I sat at the table where the "hostess" had placed me, I kept glancing about the room, stupefied in the early moments, but finally able to gather my senses and try to discern the form of my friend amidst the fluffy, chattering crowd. As best I could tell, he was not in the room. An extremely effeminate, very painted chippie had settled in the chair beside me, encouraging me to buy "her" drinks at the outrageous prices charged by the establishment. At first, I had been inclined to send the baggage away. But I finally determined it best to attempt some form of communication if I was ever to locate Holmes.

At length, when we had each consumed two or three of the frightful concoctions they served us, the creature

took my hand and placed it between "her" thighs. I became immediately cognizant of a formidable member, quite at odds with the demeanour and clothing of my companion. Through heavy strands of mesh I felt the straining rise of cock, and beneath this the form of an enormous pulsing pair of bollicks. "If yer'd like a bit o' privacy, sir," suggested the creature, "we might retire to the other room."

"Oh, really! Is there another room?" I asked hopefully. My immediate thought was that Holmes might be there. I could thus deliver my message and quit this awful place.

"Certainly, sir," said he, and taking my hand in a surprisingly hard grip, he started pulling me toward the wall behind us. As I stood, I realized the liquor I'd consumed was having a profound effect, and I was more than a little tiddly. I almost tripped before we passed between the drapes. Hardly had I regained my balance before we were through a short passageway and inside what I can only describe as "the common room".

Like the previous chamber, this was furnished with drapes and mirrors, but the light was even dimmer and instead of tables there were two rows of couches all about the walls. On several of these I saw the twisted couplings of male harlots and their guests, sometimes in pairs, more often in threes or fours. Hardly had my companion led me to one of these love-benches, than several of his fellow workers joined us. Despite my protests and struggles, clothing was being rapidly pulled from my body. I continued to resist as best I could, but the frilly coverings of my companions disguised a company of young men who possessed considerable physical strength. I was soon bare to my underdrawers, this before I managed to collect my thoughts and adjust my eyes to the decreased illumination.

At this point, many things seemed to happen all at once. I spied the tall, powerful form of Sherlock Holmes across the room, still painted and wearing the wig as last I saw him. But other than this he was completely naked,

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lying upon his back on a couch, his long legs waving in lying upon in the air as a giggling, pretty lad in a violet gown knelt against his backside, obviously sodomizing him.

"Holmes!" I shouted.

My friend's head bolted up from the pillow, and the youth held in suspended motion against him. Every eye in the room was upon me, and I could fairly feel the bristling hostility. "'Olmes!" muttered someone behind me, and at this several painted bodies were rushing at the two of us. I managed to fumble my revolver from the pocket of my coat, but in the confused tumble of arms and legs it was impossible to bring it to bear upon any specific target. However, in the darkness and chaos, my possession of the weapon must have passed unnoticed. I had been borne to the floor, and lay buried beneath a twisting mass of petticoats and naked limbs when-quite by accident-my revolver discharged.

At this same moment, a terrible commotion began in the other room, as high-pitched screams mingled with deep masculine curses. I could not imagine what had occasioned this, unless the word had spread of my own and my friend's presence. Then someone shouted: "The Police! The Police!" and in the twinkling of an eye I was freed from the weight of bodies. Someone grabbed me under the arms, while several pairs of hands took hold elsewhere and I was hustled forward, towards what appeared to be a solid wall. Somehow, in the confusion, I found myself next to Sherlock Holmes, whose naked body stood within the crowd of harlots. His appearance was simply dreadful-wig askew and his painted face a mask of blotchy smears.

"What have you done, Watson?" he whispered

sharply.

"Just as you told me, old fellow," I assured him, and I quickly communicated the messages I had originally sent with Wiggins. "... and I sent the lad to inform Gregson, just before coming in here," I concluded.

"Fool!" shouted my friend. His face blanched white

beneath its paint, and he would doubtless have added more had the concealed portal not given way at just this moment, spilling all of us outside, into the bright light of the afternoon. Now, as I have previously remarked, the Roaring Bitch was located near the center of town, its entrance being on an alley. The rear wall through which we were now projected, however, backed against a fashionable ladies' hairdressing salon, where several of the youths were evidently employed during periods when the business of harlotry was slack and that of hairgrooming was otherwise.

The flood of simpering, terrified young men carried us along in its midst, through the aisles of the salon and onto the street before the cackling, shrieking gaggle broke up, gathering their skirts and scurrying off in every direction. This left Holmes and me standing as we were, before the horrified gazes of several dozen passersby. So great was the surprise of those who saw us, it was several seconds before anyone reacted. Then it was a child who piped in a squeaky voice: "Mamma! Mamma! That man is naked!"

Holmes grasped me by the wrist and started racing along the curb, his enormous penis swinging violently from side to side, adding to the ludicrous sight of his flopping wig and the disordered paint upon his face. With my free hand, I was attempting to secure the waistband on my drawers, as I had been wearing one of those new, two-piece contrivances instead of my usual combinations. As I ran I could feel one button come loose behind, however, exposing my left cheek as I strove to keep abreast of Sherlock Holmes.

By now, the crowd behind us had recovered its wits, and their shouts were attracting the attention of those in front. There had been a constable at the corner, and I could hear his whistle as he took up the pursuit, calling for assistance as he pounded along behind us. I must say, it was quite the most mortifying experience of my life!

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ling say. ife! But there was nothing else for it; I could only run as my companion directed, and I was puffing so hard it was impossible to form the words to question his intent.

But Holmes seemed to know exactly where he was heading. His long legs carried him across the cobblestones heading. His long legs carried him across the cobblestones like a leaping marsupial until we reached the next interlike a leaping marsupial until we reached the next interlike a leaping marsupial until we reached the next interlike a leaping marsupial until we reached the next interlike a leaping marsupial until we reached the hurly which came rushing at us from the sidestreet. The burly driver hauled back in his reins, stopping the coach directly in front of us. "Damn!" I shouted, and was about to try running around it, when Sherlock Holmes yanked open the door and shoved me inside. He clambered in behind me, and almost before his lanky form was completely within, the driver whipped his horse and the vehicle was in motion. We fairly flew through the sidestreets and byways, and had progressed a good half mile before I managed to lift my head from beneath the skirts of a lady who had been seated inside the hansom.

"I greatly apologize for this unseemly intrusion, Madam," I began, when she suddenly broke into a wide grin, and I became aware of Sherlock Holmes laughing as well. Then my eyes fell upon the gentleman who sat beside the lady, and I recognized him instantly as Mr. Melas. "I

... I don't understand. . . ." I fumbled.

"Elementary, my dear Watson," said Holmes. "In this line of work one must be prepared for any eventuality. Mr. Melas you know. The young 'lady' with him is none other than the lad we went to the Roaring Bitch to find. I had sent him out just before you came into the back room. The driver, of course, is my brother Mycroft." He sat smiling at me, completely at ease and seeming very satisfied with himself. "Oh, by-the-by," he added. "Should you wish to better accourre yourself, you will find a change of clothes in the storage box beneath the seat."

"Holmes, really!" I began.

"Tut, tut, old fellow. Think nothing of it!"

"Think nothing of it?" I protested indignantly.

"Why, I have just been through the most embarrassing experience of my entire life, and you tell me to think nothing of it!"

"Not only is there nothing to be concerned about," said Holmes smugly, "but my experimentations have convinced me there is more to this transvestism than I had imagined. I shall have to make a thorough investigation of the phenomena, and I may do a monograph on the subject."

"Outrageous!" I gasped.

"Not at all," said Holmes.

"And Mr. Kratides?" I asked, attempting to change the subject. "What has become of him in all this?"

My words evoked a sudden blush and flood of tears from the young man, while both Melas and Holmes looked momentarily downcast.

"It was a most unfortunate circumstance," said my friend at length. "We came upon our Greek friend a bit late. From all appearances he had burst his bladder as a result of his rigourous confinement, and no doubt subsequent medical examination will reveal his demise as due to peritonitis."

At this, the young man burst into a spasm of wracking sobs and Mr. Melas placed his arm about the trembling shoulders to comfort him. "There, there, my dear," he whispered softly. "Now that you possess the island, you can live the rest of your days with his memory."

I cast a questioning look at Holmes, who nodded sagely. "My deductions have all proved out," he said. "Mr. Kratides' will left everything to this young man, who will take the body back for proper burial in Paradise. Not all has come out so badly, you see, and in the end it is ever good that triumphs over evil, just as intellect must always defeat the forces of stupidity."

"And Moriarty?" I asked.

"Unfortunately," replied Sherlock Holmes, "the Professor's intellect is nearly the equal of my own." FI

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THE FINAL SOLUTION

Although I worked on many more cases with Sherlock Holmes, the incident in the Roaring Bitch had served to cast a permanent and indelible pall over our relationship. Through the better part of two years, I continued to remain in the Baker Street lodgings. But I seemed always to be going through a veritable hell. I enjoyed accompanying my friend on his adventures, yet was appalled that I must suffer his nocturnal ravings—worse as his use of cocaine and other opiates grew increasingly frequent. On those nights when he did not use his drugs, he would likely don one or another of his horrid costumes and flounce off to the Bitch or some other club of similar infamy.

Left to my own devices through these many lonely evenings, it is little wonder I soon found another, less dis-

turbing companion. While I knew I should never feel for another man what I had felt—and in many ways still did feel-for Sherlock Holmes, I eventually decided I had to leave. Because I dared not face him with my decision when he was in a state of narcotic imbalance, I broached the subject one morning at breakfast. For the first and only time I can remember, my words evoked a bitter response that seemed to shatter the shell of his self-confidence.

"I know I cannot dissuade you, Watson," he said after a period of silent weeping, "for to make this statement you must surely have gone through many hours of reflection. I know your response is just, and I can blame nobody but myself." With this, he rose from his place and came around to grasp my shoulders and hold my head against his breast. His obvious distress was almost sufficient to make me waver in my resolve, but I somehow managed to retain enough of my sanity to remember all that had passed before.

Thus, I left the Baker Street lodgings that very afternoon, and taking the small sum I had been able to put aside over the past few years, I purchased a practice in an outlying section of London. The chap who came with me was the nephew of a man whom Holmes and I had assisted through a difficult crisis. His name was Jeffrey Phelps, whose surname may be recalled from some of my published accounts of the incident in question. What I felt for this lad was a protective regard, which at some moments was capable of translating itself into love. It would never attain the depths and solidity of what had been between myself and Sherlock Holmes, but for the time it served to fill the terrible void this rupture had caused to fall upon my life.

Jeffrey was several years my junior, a sandy-haired youth whose family's naval background had required his spending three years as a midshipman in Her Majesty's Service. He was small and slender, with a lithe, youthful body and a face that seemed to hold a perpetual smile.

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For the sake of convention, I have referred to this period as my "marriage" in the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes' as my in fact I felt in my heart that I was indeed cases, and in fact wedlock.

It may seem strange that I continued to see anything of Holmes during this period, or that my lover should permit it. However, Jeffrey was an extremely sensitive youth, able to appreciate the emotional upset through which I was going. He may also have had some regard for Holmes on his own part, though if such a liaison ever existed I remained ignorant of the facts—and blissfully so, for were such to have proven true I would rather have remained as I did, oblivious and unknowing.

Thus, Jeffrey and I moved into our cottage and I took up the practice of a rural doctor. For the sake of appearances, Jeffrey agreed to pose as my wife, and went about the shops in female attire. This disturbed me at first, the more so I had come to detest the practice of transvestism after my ordeal with Sherlock Holmes. Eventually, however, I became accustomed to the ruse, and in the privacy of our home I found it had not in the least affected either the virility or the masculine inclinations of my spouse.

The turning point in my acceptance of this necessary subterfuge, I think, came one evening after I had been engaged for the larger part of the day in a most delicate operation on one of the local farm youths. The young man was something of an innovator, and had been attempting to construct an electrical device by which he might milk his cows without the usual manual manipulations. Fearful that his untested device might prove injurious to his cattle, he had experimented upon his own member, with nearly disastrous results. He had neglected to make provision for the inevitable expansion of his penis, and the subsequent damage to his previously elegant appendage required my most careful skill and attention.

As a consequence of my labours, I was quite exhausted when Jeffrey returned from his marketing. I was

lying on our bed, in a semistupor and close to the verge of sleep, when my young spouse came in. Following my customary practice, I had removed my clothes and slipped between the sheets. I found this state of undress infinitely more relaxing than any attempt to nap within the restrictions of normal accourrement. Seeing this, Jeffrey had removed his gown and underclothes before making any sound that might alert me to his presence. He slid his hard, warm body down next to me, placed his lips to mine and awakened me with the pressure of his tongue as it glided deep within my mouth.

Being still but partially in possession of my faculties. despite my instantly flaring arousal, I muttered some inanity which must have displeased him. I had noticed his discarded items of feminine apparel and when he freed my mouth it was concerning these that I made a remark . . . something to the effect of how badly I felt at his

being compelled to wear them.

"I'll show you it hasn't affected me," said he, and at once began to bathe my body with his tongue. I think no portion escaped his attention, for he worked with unflagging energy over a long period of time. He sucked upon my nipples, licked and gnawed at them until the tips were sore, hardly able to bear his further attentions. He caressed my throat and arms and shoulders, first with his hands and subsequently with his lips and tongue, bringing to life every neural receptor across the entire surface of my torso. All the while he did this, I continually felt the power of his cock as this struck me, held in desperate pressure when he rested his loins upon one portion or another of my skin. Several times I reached for him, grasped the rigid member and fondled it between my fingers.

Jeffrey lacked the monstrous dimensions of Sherlock Holmes, but his cock and bollicks formed such an exquisite, symmetrical appendage one quite forgot their more normal proportions. His genitals had about them the same quality of fresh youthfulness as all the rest of him, and

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Sherlock an exquitheir more m the same him, and on the many occasions when I had taken his gentle sex within my mouth I had savored a sweetness and a pulse within my mouth that never failed to requite my most of genuine adoration that never failed to requite my most of genuine and a passions.

But this day, Jeffrey was insistent that I should not But this day, Jeffrey was insistent that I should not in any way determine the course of our exchange. He took in any way determine I grasped him and pushed them down my wrists each time I grasped him and pushed them down with gentle firmness upon the mattress. Then his probing possession would continue, and his tongue would work upon some new and different part of me. All across my chest and abdomen he worked his way, kissing me and gathering the flesh between his lips, drawing as much of my being inside him as he could. I had followed a strict regimen of diet and exercise, so had retained the firmness of limb and muscle which had been my pride as a youth. Now, in my twenty-eighth year, I still presented a solid figure for my lover's edification.

Jeffrey progressed beyond my navel, traced his warmth and moisture across my groin and down the length of my fiercely tumescent shaft. He paused a moment at the tip, grasped it with his lips and kissed it. Then he let it spring back to lie firmly pressed against my underbelly, as he plunged his face between my thighs and laved their inner surfaces. From here, he moved down the full extent of one shank and returned along the other. He projected me into a state of trembling desire until I almost begged him to once more take my prick inside his mouth.

But Jeffrey was determined to complete his own, preconceived manipulations. He eased me over, onto my stomach, and pursued the same pattern of possession as he had upon my front side. The tantalizing heat of his mouth came down upon the upper terminus of my spine, and he followed the course of this to its base, neglecting not a modicum of the hard, lateral muscles that curved away to either side. When he reached my posterior, he kissed me gently upon both cheeks and at this point his intentions became increasingly clear. His tongue probed

deep inside the trench, thoroughly laved the whole expanse of my crevice until he touched the hidden orifice.

Then he dropped his tongue inside, his motion becoming ever more frantic and demanding as his hands drove my thighs apart and his lingual penetration exceeded any bounds I had though were possible. Abruptly, before the warmth of his moisture could cool or dry upon my flesh, he poised astride my backside and slipped the rounded tip of his penis towards my opening. "Now," he whispered, "now, I'll prove that I'm no woman! You think the clothes can make me female?" His breath came hard and he seemed possessed by a sudden madness. He laughed softly, continued his muttered ravings as he pressed the cockhead into me.

I must confess to a surge of spasming expectation that Jeffrey might never be expected to requite. It was a residual remembrance of my former association. But as I felt the solid length of his shaft slide into me I was fully cognizant of Jeffrey Phelps' being very much a man. And he knew precisely how to use his gifts to their very best advantage. I soon felt the thrill of impalement and the same full range of responses which Holmes' more heroic size had once called forth. Jeffrey lowered his body on mine and gripped me solidly with both arms as his groin began to fall against me with a steady, rocking rhythm. "Tell me, John. Am I a man, or not? Tell me!" he whispered by my ear. "Tell me."

"You are," I gasped. "You are and always were."
"I love you, John," he continued. "I love you."

And in those moments there was no denying the affection I felt for him. I returned his words of endearment with all the truth and fervor of his own statements. The pressure of his warm, hard body on top of mine, the sensation of full possession his cock called forth . . . all served to make me respond fully to him and to speak the words he wished to hear. My deep regard, plus the furious drive of his lance within my body, had precipitated the

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rushing tide of my own gathering discharge. I knew it rushing moments before his use might force my flood; but first I wished to feel his body tighten and his cock to swell and tremble as it erupted within me.

"Harder,' I urged him. "Make me know how much of a man you really are! Harder, harder!"

In a frenzy of slamming, hammering desperation, Jeffrey beat his groin against my ass. His bollicks lifted with his loins and crashed against my underside of crotch as he reamed and twisted against me. His arms never lessened their hold. When he raised his lower body his cock came almost free, but he never permitted the swollen crown to escape the enclosing grip of my sphincter. The full length of his shaft travelled into and through me. exciting every gland and organ, awakening the ache of hunger in both my soul and spirit. Finally, when his motions became slower and his strokes more deep and deliberate, I knew his moment was at hand. And this knowledge overcame all restraint. Helplessly I spewed forth a stream of semen that puddled on the sheet beneath me. Almost in the same instant I felt his fountain of heated fury, and Jeffrey Phelps released his love within me. His body flexed and writhed. He shook and trembled, held tight upon me, glued to my back by a layer of sweat and grasping the nape of my neck with his teeth.

After this, I had less concern for his exterior attire, though in fact I must admit I began to observe his disguise with a heightened sense of guilt. It disturbed me greatly that such should be necessary, that the world should be unable to accept such a pure and simple love as ours. Someday perhaps, I thought . . . someday the blind, unreasoned hatreds of mankind may be lifted. As God once granted sight to the Apostle Paul, so might he grant our love an inner sense to know the truth and good-

ness of our fellows.

After this we fell into an easier pattern of life, Jeffrey After this we fell and I, and it continued for the better part of a year. I

had seen Sherlock Holmes a number of times, actually gone on several sojourns with him, as I have recorded in my published journals. I refrained from physical contact. however, and Holmes seemed to respect my feelings. I had assured Jeffrey this would be the case, and by his accept. ance of my continued association with this former lover, I am certain he accepted my pledge.

It was in the spring of the year that the dreadful event I must record began, and were it not for the pub. lished letters of Col. James Moriarty, in which he attempted to exonerate his brother's guilt at the expense of Sherlock Holmes, I might have spared myself this painful task. Thus, it is with a heavy heart I take up my pen to write these last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend was distinguished. In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion, I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in his company, both here and in my more widely known journals.

I think back now over the relatively short span of years, dating from our first, chance meeting and the subsequent period I have called the "Study in Lavender Lace", up to the time of the naval case which brought my Jeffrey to me. I would have stopped there and said nothing of that event which has created such a void in my life, had the surviving Moriarty not forced my hand. I have given a public account of this already, but feel the true circumstances should be recorded and preserved for a day when a healthier, more understanding readership may find it.

During the past winter, and into the spring to which I have previously alluded, I had seen in the papers that Holmes had been engaged by the French government upon a matter of supreme importance, and I received two notes from him during that time. One had been dated from Narbonne, the other from Nîmes, from which I gathered that his stay in France was likely to be a long one. It was with some surprise, therefore, that I saw him

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walk into my consulting-room upon the evening of April walk into my or that he was looking even paler and 24th. It struck me that he was looking even paler and

thinner than usual. "Yes, I have been using myself up rather too freely," he remarked, in answer to my look rather than to my

he remarked, words; "I have been a little pressed of late. Have you any objection to my closing your shutters?"

The only light in the room came from the lamp upon the table at which I had been reading. Holmes edged his way around the wall, and, flinging the shutters together, he bolted them securely.

"You are afraid of something?" I asked.

"Well, I am."

"Of what?"

"Of air-guns."

"My dear Holmes, what do you mean?"

"I think that you know me well enough, Watson, to understand that I am by no means a nervous man. At the same time, it is stupidity rather than courage to refuse to recognize danger when it is close upon you. Might I trouble you for a match?" He drew in the smoke of his cigarette as if the soothing influence was grateful to him.

"I must apologize for calling so late," said he, "and I must further beg you to be so unconventional as to allow me to leave your house presently by scrambling over your back garden wall."

"But what does it all mean?" I asked.

He held out his hand, and I saw in the light of the lamp that two of his knuckles were burst and bleeding.

"It's not an airy nothing, you see," said he, smiling. "On the contrary, it is solid enough for a man to break his hand over. Is Jeffrey in?"

"He is away on a visit."

"Indeed! You are alone?"

"Quite."

"Then it makes it the easier for me to propose that you should come away with me for a week to the Contisodi em que e un din en el en el nent."

"I . . . well, I cannot. . . . Holmes, you know my feelings; but we have entered into another phase of exist. ence and I dare not play unfairly with my dear Jeffrey."

"Nonsense!" snapped Holmes. "I am not asking you to bed. I have need of your company and your solid, English constitution during my present time of trial."

"Where are we to go, then?" I asked.

A shallow shade of smile was his only acknowledgement of my agreement. But in answer to my question he made a distracted motion with his hand. "Oh, anywhere," he said. "It's all the same to me."

There was something very strange in all this. It was not Holmes' nature to take an aimless holiday, and something about his pale, worn face told me that his nerves were at their highest tension. He saw the question in my eyes, and, putting his fingertips together and his elbows upon his knees, he explained the situation.

"Ever since that affair with Melas, the Greek interpreter chap, I have been increasingly aware of the evil influences emanating from some hidden source. You will recall my mention of Professor Moriarty?"

"Yes," said I, "though his very elusiveness has made me harbour some doubts as to his existence beyond your

own imaginings."

Holmes nodded, smiling grimly. "Yes, yes," he whispered. "So is the attitude within our official circles. What they cannot see with their own, limited perceptions, they refuse to believe. Oh, I'm sorry, old fellow," he added quickly. "I did not mean to include you!" At this, his hand fell upon my shoulder, and the old, disturbing response burst through me. It was as if his touch were somehow electric, and the radiating energies of his body projected into mine as currents from a dynamo. I would have pulled away from him, but my own emotions compelled me to hold, while awareness of his present conflict precluded my making any move which might further agravate his distraught state of mind.

He had been sitting silent, no doubt mulling the

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lock Holmes I remembered. "Ay, there's the genius and the wonder of the thing!" he cried. "The man pervades London, and no one has he then heard of him. That's what puts him on the pinnacle in the records of crime and infamy. I tell you, Watson, in all seriousness, that if I could beat this man, if I could free society of him, I should feel that my own career had reached its summit, and I should be prepared to return to some more placid line in life. Between ourselves, these recent cases in which I have been of assistance to the royal family of Scandinavia, and to the French Republic, have left me in such a position that I could continue to live in the quiet fashion which is most congenial to me, and to concentrate my attention upon my chemical researches. But I could not rest, Watson, I could not sit quiet in my chair, if I thought that such a man as Professor Moriarty were free to practice his evil will upon the innocent youth of our own England and those young men everywhere, whose physical beauty brings them under the scrutiny of this vile, obscenely malignant man."

"What has he done, then?" I asked.

"His career has been an extraordinary one. He is a man of good birth and excellent education, endowed by nature with a phenomenal sexual apparatus and an indomitable lust. At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise upon the bisexual behavior of the ancients, and on the strength of it he won the biological sciences chair at one of our smaller universities, which gave him, of one of our smaller universities, which gave him, of course, the access he desired to a steady supply of young course, the access he desired to a steady supply of young and healthy men. But Moriarty has hereditary tendencies and healthy men. But Moriarty has hereditary tendencies and healthy men being modified and satiated by blood, which instead of being modified and satiated by his exposure and use of his students, only led him to perform such acts of depraved excess, they could not long be kept secret. Dark rumours gathered around him in the

mulling the

university town, and eventually he was compelled to resign his chair and to come down to London. Here, he set up as an army coach, thus giving him continued access to the rugged, athletic bodies his dark urgings required.

"As you are aware, Watson, there is no one who knows the higher criminal world of London so well as I do. For some years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organizing power which forever stands in the way of the law and throws its shield over the wrongdoer. Again and again, in cases of the most varying sorts—forgery cases, robberies, murders—I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its action in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally consulted. For years I have endeavoured to break through the veil which shrouded it, and at last the time came when I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me, after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty and his singular, sexual celebrity.

"He is the Caligula of London, the Napoleon of Crime. He has done this, you see, to earn him both the wealth and a powerful status within the criminal community which permits his terrible appetites to be fed, and his felonious abuses later to be thoroughly concealed. Yet despite the urgings of his loins, he is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself, only plans for others, until some tender lad has been drawn close to his vicious pincers. Then he leaps, and the unfortunate youth is lost. He is heard of no more, else rendered an emotional cripple, forever dependent upon the whims of his master.

"All this was frightful enough when Moriarty concentrated his attentions on those poor unfortunates of the lower classes, or at worst upon the sons of moderately substantial families. Of late, however, he has taken a fancy to nent lines by his pe slaves. In very ultil exist in the accep of these this frig Professo round w impossih of law. of three met an horror skill and gender

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fancy to the scions of several extremely wealthy, prominent lines. He has abused them as he did the others, and
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very ultimate of his excessive usage, and several now
very ultimate of his excessive usage, and several now
exist in various stages of mental disturbance, just within
the accepted standards of sanity. In time, the birthrights
of these young men will place them in positions where
this frightful condition will permit their further use by
Professor Moriarty.

"Try as I would, Watson, the professor was so fenced round with safeguards so cunningly devised that it seemed impossible to get evidence which would convict in a court of law. You know my powers, my dear, and yet at the end of three months I was forced to confess that I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal. My horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration at his skill and at the unflagging devotion he was able to engender in his victims, even after his frightful abuse of

them.

"But at last he made a trip—only a little trip—but it was more than he could afford, when I was so close upon him. I had my chance, and, starting from that point, I have woven my net around him until now it is all ready to close. In three days—that is to say, on Monday next—matters will be ripe, and the professor, with all the principal members of his gang, will be in the hands of the police. Then will come the greatest criminal trial of the century, the clearing up of over forty mysteries, and the rope for them all. But if we move at all prematurely, you understand, they may slip out of our hands even at the last moment.

"Now, if I could have done this without the knowledge of Professor Moriarty, all would have been well. But he was too wily for that. He saw every step which I took to draw my toils around him. Again and again he strove to break away, but I continued to head him off until at last he challenged me."

"Challenged you?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Precisely! As I've remarked previously, Moriarty has the most formidable stamina of any sexually func. tioning man in the world. He prides himself on it, and if there is any aspect of human intercourse where he has no fear of competition it is this. His powers are overwhelming, and his challenge to me was delivered with all the pomp and ritual of a medieval joust. He sent his seconds to meet with me and throw down the gauntlet. The issue would be decided, he proposed, by a combat between the two of us. I, as the recipient of the formal insult, would be free to choose the time and place. Our bodies would be the weapons, and the first to falter . . . the first whose flesh should fail to respond would be honor-bound to admit defeat. The conditions, then, were simple. Were he to win, I would agree to retire from the pursuit of crime and criminals. If I should win he would leave England and take all his evil entourage with him.

"Thus, even his challenge was a clever bit of deception. With his victory he wins completely. I am forever barred from interference. If I should win, only England would be safe from his predatory abuses. The rest of the world would lie open to him. I might, I suppose, have negotiated a more satisfactory set of conditions. But I dared not do even this much. Had he challenged me to some contest of intellect . . . the solving of some problem posed by an objective monitor, a game of chess or some other contest devised for the purpose . . . in any of these I might have been tempted. On such grounds we would have been well matched and the challenge would have held some meaning. But physically, though I must admit I had never seen the man-at this time I had never seen him-I knew his reputation and I dared not let the fate of our entire nation ride upon the outcome."

"I can't imagine anything more absurd!" I answered

quickly.

"On the surface, perhaps," Holmes replied. "But on further reflection, there is a certain logic to it. If we could deciment that mean that mean that perish in I lodged in lodged in quire a very will surely two men the wisdoworld wenthink how dering conglobe."

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"But on it. If we

could decide the issue between ourselves, it would likely mean that several score will live, who must otherwise perish in the struggle. His men are armed, in some cases perish in the struggle entrenchments. To take them will relodged in fortified entrenchments. To take them will require a veritable army of police, and in the struggle there quire a veritable army of fall like soldiers in battle. As will surely be some who fall like soldiers in battle. As Moriarty expressed it in his communication to me: 'As two men of superior intellect, we are able to appreciate the wisdom of such a trial by combat. If the nations of the world were only as able to see factual realities this clearly, think how many men might be alive today, whose mouldering corpses lie in military graveyards all around the globe.'"

"Then you did consider it?"

"Of course I considered it! What I say to you now is the result of many hours of deliberation. My conclusion is based simply on the knowledge that defeating him in his proposed manner of conflict would be so highly improbable I couldn't take the chance. The stakes were simply too high, and in truth they are not mine to gamble with."

"Have you refused? I mean, have you actually informed him negatively?" I asked. Holmes nodded solemnly. "I have. But I delayed in giving my reply, thereby gaining time to set the trap that is now ready to snare him. My problem is simply to preserve my life until the moment of its closing."

"You said something a moment ago that leads me to believe you have actually met Moriarty," I suggested.

"Yes. I had informed his associates that I would consider their proposal and give them my answer two days hence. Therefore, on the morning of the appointed day hence. Therefore, on the morning of the appointed day I expected one of his messengers to communicate with I expected one of his messengers to communicate with me. I was prepared for him, keeping a loaded revolver always at hand, should the fellow's orders be to destroy always at hand, should the fellow's orders be to destroy me if I did not agree. I was sitting in my room, thinking the matter over, when the door opened and I knew it could only be Professor Moriarty who stood before me.

"He is not a particularly tall man, an inch or so shorter than you, my dear. But his body is stocky, packed with rounds of muscle and sinew, honed to a fine point of strength and vigour. My immediate impression was of darkness, as if Satan himself stood before me. His hair is black, as are his eyes, and the sinister character of this aspect is furthered by a small, well-trimmed goatee. He was dressed in sombre greys and blacks, all of the finest quality and tailored to display the magnificence of his physique and his phenomenal sexual potential. I was immediately impressed by him, and I cannot deny the swell of anxiety which caused my heart to flutter and the pulse to beat more fiercely in my throat. I closed my fingers about the revolver as I stood to face him."

"'You have less frontal development than I should have expected,' said he at last. 'It is a dangerous habit to finger loaded firearms in the pocket of one's dressing-

gown.'

"I had been so dumbfounded at his audacity in coming face-to-face with me, I was temporarily unable to answer him.

"'You evidently don't know me,' said he.

"'On the contrary,' I answered. 'I think it is fairly evident that I do. Pray take a chair. I can spare you five minutes if you have anything to say.'

"'All that I have to say has already been communi-

cated to you,' said he.

"'Then possibly my answer has crossed your mind,' I replied.

"'You refuse?'

" 'Absolutely.'

"He clapped his hand into his pocket, and I raised the pistol which I had placed upon the table. But he merely drew a memorandum book in which he had scribbled some dates.

"'You crossed my path on the fourth of January," said he. 'On the twenty-third you incommoded me; by the middle of February I was seriously inconvenienced by

you; at the en the extent of le for months. N placed in such tion that I am situation is be "I have told him with "'You m you really mu "We sh " Not be of us. Only of to face me m commands m "So be "Moriar he repeated. "That w riarty. I con mind. His so tion of since Of course, y against him from his ag have the bes "You l "My de the grass gr to transact s corner which beck Street whizzed rou

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anuary, by the you; at the end of March I was absolutely hampered to the extent of losing a young man I had planned to take for months. Now, at the close of April, I find myself placed in such a position through your continual persecution that I am in positive danger of losing my liberty. The situation is becoming an impossible one.'

"'I have already rejected your proposed solution,' I

told him with some firmness.

"'You must drop it, Mr. Holmes. One way or another you really must.'

"'We shall see,' said I.

"'Not both of us,' said Moriarty grimly. 'Not both of us. Only one can survive the conflict, and if you refuse to face me man-to-man, then the forces at our respective commands must be brought to bear.'

"'So be it,' I answered calmly.

"Moriarty nodded and stood up to leave. 'So be it,'

he repeated.

"That was my singular interview with Professor Moriarty. I confess that it left an unpleasant effect upon my mind. His soft, precise fashion of speech leaves a conviction of sincerity which a mere bully could not produce. Of course, you will say: 'Why not take police precautions against him?' The reason is that I am well convinced it is from his agents rather than himself the blow will fall. I have the best of proofs that it would be so."

"You have already been assaulted?"

"My dear, Professor Moriarty is not a man who lets the grass grow under his feet. I went out about midday to transact some busines on Oxford Street. As I passed the corner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welcorner which leads from the furiously driven beck Street crossing, a two-horse van furiously driven whized round and was on me like a flash. I sprang to the footpath and saved myself by the fraction of a second. The van dashed round by Marylebone Lane and was gone in an instant. I kept to the pavement after that, Watson, but as I walked down Vere Street a brick came down from the roof of one of the houses and was shattered to

fragments at my feet. I called the police and had the place examined. There were slates and bricks piled up on the roof preparatory to some repairs, and they would have me believe that the wind had toppled over one of these. Of course I knew better, but I could prove nothing. I took a cab after that and reached my brother's room in Pall Mall, where I spent the day. Now I have come round to you, and on my way I was attacked by a rough with a bludgeon. I knocked him down, and the police have him in cusotdy; but I can tell you with the most absolute confidence that no possible connection will ever be traced between the gentleman upon whom I have barked my knuckles and the very mysterious ex-professor, who is, I daresay, working his will on some innocent lad, while a flock of respectable witnesses are ready to testify he was ten miles away at the time of this last assault. So, you will not wonder, my dear, that my first act on entering your rooms was to close your shutters, and that I have been compelled to ask your permission to leave the house by some less conspicuous exit than the front door."

I had often admired my friend's courage, but never more than now, as he sat quietly checking off a series of incidents which must have combined to make up a day of

horror.

"You will spend the night here?" I said.

"No, my friend, you might find me a dangerous guest. I have my plans laid, and all will be well. Matters have gone so far now that they can move without my help as far as the arrest goes, though my presence is necessary for a conviction. It is obvious, therefore, that I cannot do better than get away for the few days which remain before the police are at liberty to act. It would be a great pleasure to me, therefore, if you could come on to the Continent with me," he added, repeating his former invitation.

Although Sherlock Holmes was too proud to admit it, even to me, I knew he was sufficiently disturbed to desire a companion upon whom he could rely in a crisis. It was a single reason I or reason I was a single reason I was a single round words as out with which lear

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It was a situation in which I was needed, and for this It was I offered no further objections. "Where shall I meet you, then?" I asked.

"At the station. The second first-class carriage from

the front will be reserved for us."

"The carriage is our rendezvous?"

"Yes."

It was in vain that I asked Holmes to remain for the evening. It was evident to me that he thought he might bring trouble to the roof he was under, and that was the motive which impelled him to go. With a few hurried words as to our plans for the morrow he rose and came out with me into the garden, clambering over the wall which leads to Mortimer Street, and immediately whistling for a hansom, in which I heard him drive away.

In the morning I obeyed Holmes' injunctions to the letter. A hansom was procured with such precautions as would prevent its being one which was placed ready for us, and I drove immediately after breakfast to Lowther Arcade, through which I hurried at the top of my speed. A brougham was waiting with a very massive driver wrapped in a dark cloak, who, the instant that I stepped in, whipped up the horse and rattled off to Victoria Station. On my alighting there he turned the carriage, and dashed away again without so much as a look in my direction.

So far all had gone admirably. My luggage was waiting for me, and I had no difficulty in finding the carriage which Holmes had indicated, the less so as it was the only one in the train which was marked "Engaged". My only souce of anxiety now was the non-appearance of Holmes. The station clock marked only seven minutes from the time when we were due to start. In vain I searched among the groups of travellers and leave-takers for the lithe figure of my friend. There was no sign of him. I spent a few minutes in assisting a venerable Italian him. I spent a lew endeavouring to make a porter underpriest, who was broken English, that his luggage was to be

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booked through to Paris. Then, having taken another look round, I returned to my carriage, where I found that the porter, in spite of the ticket, had given me my decrepit Italian friend as a travelling companion. It was useless for me to explain to him that his presence was an intrusion, for my Italian was even more limited than his English; so I shrugged my shoulders resignedly, and continued to look out anxiously for my friend. A chill of fear had come over me, as I thought his absence might mean some blow had fallen during the night. Already the doors had all been shut and the whistle blown, when . . .

"My dear Watson," said a voice, "you have not even condescended to say good morning." I turned in uncontrollable astonishment. The aged ecclesiastic had turned his face towards me. For an instant the wrinkles were smoothed away, the nose drew up from the chin, the lower lips ceased to protrude and the mouth to mumble. The dull eyes regained their fire, and the drooping figure expanded. Next the whole frame collapsed again, and Holmes had gone as quickly as he had come.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "How you startled me!"

"Every precaution is still necessary," he whispered.
"I have reason to think that they are hot upon our trail.
Ah, there is Moriarty himself."

The train had already begun to move as Holmes spoke. Glancing back, I saw a powerful man pushing his way furiously through the crowd, and waving his hand as if he desired to have the train stopped. It was too late, however, for we were rapidly gathering momentum, and an instant later had shot clear of the station.

"With all our precautions, you see, we have cut it rather fine," said Holmes, laughing. He rose, and throwing off the black cassock and hat that had formed his disguise, he stood before me in just his shoes and stockings. At my look of surprise, he chuckled. "No time to acquire the proper undergarments for a priest's raiment," he said lightly. "I hope I am not shocking you."

I have never been certain if he did it deliberately of

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"Ah, take it, Watson; take it!" he muttered. Both his hands now gripped my head, and his balance was dependent upon his unsteady stance on the undulating floor. The back and forth motion of the train forced his rigid tumescence to strike unexpected angles against the sides and roof of my mouth. But the very possession of him, the mere knowledge that I held him fast within me, when moments before I had despaired of his survival, made his every touch a magical inroad to my inner thoughts and being.

Of a sudden, we were through the tunnel and the open countryside flashed by outside our window. Nothing mattered to me save the swollen bolt I held between my lips, however, and had the crowned heads of Europe been gathered outside the glass to watch I would have continued as I did. I sucked the rigid flesh inside me. I laved the sides and made the skin slide down to cover the crown so I could run my tongue around beneath it. I probed the vertical slit and savoured the drop of fluid that seeped out of it. It was a harbinger, a promise of what must come, an aperitif before the feast.

I was staring into his dark curling mass of hair, watching its outlines fade and refocus as I pressed against him and drew back. I held his cockhead between my lips, and gazed down the long extent of his shaft. I thrilled to

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the glistening contour and likened it in my mind to the gleaming tracks on which we rode. That what I was doing was completely disloyal to Jeffrey did not occur to me in those moments. Nothing penetrated my brain except the longing need to take this man inside me, to love him yes, to love him! May all the powers forgive me, but there was no help for it. This bond that joined me to Sherlock Holmes was greater than any quantitative system could measure. It was a merging of emotional and physical desire, symbolized at that instant by the driving prick I held between my lips.

I slid my head against him several times, drew back and glanced upward across the straining, hard-flexed muscles of his chest and abdomen. He was watching me, his grey eyes soft with love, but his face contorted by the exquisite sensual bliss I gave him. He was taking pleasure in watching his steely column enter me, and knowing this

I returned again to my labours.

How long I stayed there, sitting at first on the padded seat, later kneeling on the floor in front of him, I have no way to estimate. Time was a fleeting entity, a meaningless shell of transparent fantasy which suddenly had no meaning. I wrapped my arms about his legs, splayed my fingers across the solid curves of his buttocks and plunged my face upon his loins. Several times I paused, released his heavy shaft and sucked his bollicks into me. In each instance I found them hard against the underside of his cock, holding fast in anticipation of release. I drew them in, held them, gently stretched the sac until they hung distended and I could almost swing upon their mass as I looked up towards the swaying projection of his penis. I found it beautiful, gloriously symmetrical in all its gnarled proportions. Like the rest of him, it assumed a quality of grandeur, of perfection that fulfilled my every craving and satisfied the deepest urgings of my soul.

At long last, I took him with a fervour which propelled him through the highest flights of ecstasy. His bollicks on tight so me tight so me the trembled steady structure flooded a cated the

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Long after I had finished, when his quaking flesh had lost its desperate hardness and his probing cock had finally softened to a flaccid, bloated mass, I continued to hold him, to stroke his body with my hands and draw upon the drained and empty shaft of sex. I wanted to say in words what my motions were already expressing to him. But there was no need. Our understanding was complete. Holmes' ability to see into another's most secret thoughts must surely have alerted him to the confused jumble of my inner cognitions. It was then that I first thought of Jeffrey, and I knew I had done him an irreparable injury. Not to tell him what had happened would be to compound the hurt; yet otherwise, it would surely end the brief span of happiness I had enjoyed with him. But I also knew my love for this younger man had been a tenuous thing at best. And if I examined all the aspects carefully I knew in my own heart that he had never been unaware of the hold Sherlock Holmes had upon me. In the end, it would probably come as no surprise, and I hoped the consequences might thus be the lighter for him.

At length, Holmes pulled gently free of me. He turned and rummaged in his bag, stuffing the priestly costume into it and drawing forth a set of combinations. Hastily he put these on and danced about as he shoved his feet

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down the legs of his trousers. He buttoned his shirt and placed the familiar hound's-tooth tweed across the seat beside him. His evident haste impressed itself upon me, and by then I had sufficiently recovered my wits to question him.

"What do you suppose Professor Moriarty is going to do?" I asked.

"What should I do in similar circumstances?"

"What would you do, then?"

"Engage a special."

"But it must be too late."

"By no means. This train stops at Canterbury; and there is always at least a quarter of an hour's delay at the boat. He will catch us there."

"One would think that we were the criminals. Let us have him arrested on his arrival."

"It would ruin the work of three months. We should get the big fish, but the smaller would dart right and left out of the net. On Monday we should have them all. No, an arrest is inadmissible."

"What then?"

"We shall get out at Canterbury."

"And then?"

"Well, then we must make a cross-country journey to Newhaven, and so over to Dieppe. Moriarty will again do what I should do. He will get on to Paris, mark down our luggage, and wait for two days at the depot. In the meantime we shall treat ourselves to a couple of carpetbags, encourage the manufactures of the countries through which we travel, and make our way at our leisure into Switzerland, via Luxembourg and Basle."

At Canterbury, therefore, we alighted, only to find that we should have to wait an hour before we could get a train to Newhaven. I was still looking ruefully after the rapidly disappearing luggage-van which contained my wardrobe, when Holmes pulled my sleeve and pointed up the line.

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Far away, from among the Kentish woods there rose a thin spray of smoke. A minute later a carriage and engine could be seen flying along the open curve which leads to the station. We had hardly time to take our place behind a pile of luggage when it passed with a rattle and a roar, beating a blast of hot air into our faces.

"There he goes," said Holmes, as we watched the carriage swing and rock over the points. "There are limits, you see, to our friend's intelligence. It would have been a coup-de-maître had he deduced what I would deduce and acted accordingly!"

"And what would he have done had he overtaken

us?" "There cannot be the least doubt that he would have made a murderous attack upon me. It is, however, a game at which two may play. The question now is whether we should take a premature lunch here, or run our chance of starving before we reach the buffet at Newhaven."

We made our way to Brussels that night and spent two days there, moving on upon the third day as far as Strasburg. On the Monday morning Holmes telegraphed to the London police, and in the evening we found a reply waiting for us at our hotel. Holmes tore it open and then with a bitter curse hurled it into the grate.

"I might have known it!" he groaned. "He has escaped!"

"Moriarty?"

"They have secured the whole gang with the exception of him. He has given them the slip. Of course, when I had left the country there was no one to cope with him. But I did think that I had put the game into their hands. I think that you had better return to England, Watson."

"Why?"

"Because you will find me a dangerous companion now. This man's occupation is gone. He is lost if he renow. This man of the redevote his whole energies to revenging himself upon me. devote his which in our short interview, and I fancy that he meant it. I should certainly recommend you to return

to your practice and your lovely spouse."

"I could never do that," I said. "What I had with Jeffrey can never be reclaimed, and as you know . . ." I broke off, because I could see the softness steal into his expression, and there was no need to say it out.

At length he nodded. "So be it," whispered Sherlock

Holmes.

For a charming week we wandered up the valley of the Rhine, and then, branching off at Leuk, we made our way over the Gemmi Pass, still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken to Meiringen. It was a lovely trip, the dainty green of spring below, the virgin white of the winter above. But though we savoured these wonders of nature's art by day, and shared our bodies in the fullness of love each night, it was clear to me that never for one instant did Holmes forget the shadow which lay across him. In the homely Alpine villages or in the lonely mountain passes, I could still tell by his quick glancing eyes and his sharp scrutiny of every face that passed us, he was well convinced that, walk where we would, we could not walk ourselves clear of the danger which was dogging our footsteps.

Once, I remember, as we passed over the Gemmi, and walked along the border of the melancholy Daubensee, a large rock which had been dislodged from the ridge upon our right clattered down and roared into the lake behind us. In an instant Holmes had raced up on the ridge, and, standing upon a lofty pinnacle, craned his neck in every direction. It was in vain that our guide assured him that a fall of stones was a common chance in the springtime at that spot. He said nothing, but he smiled with the air of a man who sees the fulfillment of that which he had expected.

And yet for all his watchfulness he was never depressed. On the contrary, I can never recollect having seen him in such exuberant spirits. His love-making was an inspired thing, and his energies-whether heightened

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by the mountain air or not, I was unable to tell-were so much greater than even his natural capacity, I began to wonder if he might not have done as well to take up Moriarty's challenge. Surely, no man alive could possibly defeat him in any contest of sexual ability.

But beneath the cheerfulness, and possibly the cause of it, I felt a morbid contrast. It didn't dampen the spirits of my friend, though I found his stoic attitude distressing. Several times, he reiterated the view that if he could be assured that society was freed from Professor Moriarty he would gladly bring his own career to a conclusion.

"I think that I may go so far as to say, Watson, that I have not lived wholly in vain," he remarked. "If my record were closed tonight, I could still survey it with equanimity. The air of London is the sweeter for my presence. In several hundred cases I am not aware that I have ever used my powers upon the wrong side. Of late I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by nature rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial state of society is responsible. Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson, upon the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe."

I shall be brief, and yet exact, in what little remains for me to tell. It is not a subject on which I would willingly dwell, and yet I am conscious that a duty devolves upon me to omit no detail.

It was on the third of May that we reached the little village of Meiringen, where we put up at the Englischer Hof, then kept by Peter Steiler the elder. Our landlord was an honorary member of Mycroft Holmes' Diogenes Club, apparently held in reverence by them for some extraordinary feats during one or more of their rites. He spoke excellent English, and offered to provide us with our choice of the local youth. Holmes and I declined, naturally, as we were still enjoying what amounted to a honeymoon. At the advice of our host, on the afternoon of the fourth we set off together, with the intention of of the fourth we and spending the night at the hamlet of

Rosenlaui. We had strict injunctions, however, on no account to pass the falls of Reichenbach, which were about halfway up the hills, without making a small detour to see them.

It is, indeed, a fearful place. The torrent, swollen by the melting snow, plunges into a tremendous abyss, from which the spray rolls up like the smoke from a burning house. The shaft into which the river hurls itself is an immense chasm, lined by glistening coal-black rock, and narrowing into a steaming, boiling pit of incalculable depth, which brims over and shoots the stream onward over its jagged lip. The long sweep of green water roaring forever down, and the thick flickering curtain of spray hissing forever upward, turn a man giddy with their constant whirl and clamour. We stood near the edge peering down at the gleam of the breaking water far below us against the black rocks, and listening to the half-human shout which came booming up with the spray out of the abyss.

The path had been cut halfway round the fall to afford a complete view, but it ended abruptly, and the traveller had to return as he came. We had turned to do so, when we saw a most attractive Swiss lad come running along it with a letter in his hand. It bore the mark of the hotel which we had just left and was addresed to me by the landlord. It appeared that within a very few minutes of our leaving, an English lady had arrived who was in the last stages of consumption. She had wintered at Davos Platz and was journeying now to join her friends at Lucerne, when a sudden hemorrhage had overtaken her. It was thought that she could hardly live a few hours, but it would be a great consolation to her to see an English doctor, and, if I would only return, etc. The good Steiler assured me in a postscript that he would himself look upon my compliance as a very great favour, since the lady absolutely refused to see a Swiss physician, and he could not but feel he was incurring a great responsibility.

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The appeal was one which could not be ignored. It was impossible to refuse the request of a fellow-countryman dying in a strange land. Yet I had my scruples about leaving Holmes. It was finally agreed, however, that he should retain the young Swiss messenger with him as guide and companion while I returned to Meiringen. My friend would stay some little time at the fall, he said, and would then walk slowly over the hill to Rosenlaui, where I was to rejoin him in the evening. As I turned away I saw Holmes, with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of waters. It was the last time that I was ever to see him in such a pensive mood.

I continued to think about the suddenness with which this request had come to me, and I had proceeded perhaps half an hour on my way, when I remembered I had the hotel reckoning in my pocket. I pulled this out, and then the sheet the young Swiss had brought me. It was immediately apparent the two had not been inscribed by the same hand, and I knew the bill was Steiler's because I had watched him write it. The other, then, was an obvious forgery!

With all the strength at my command, I began racing back up the steep incline. I was soon winded, and forced to sit and rest. Then I struggled on, clawing frantically at the rocks in the steepest parts, running full tilt through any area that was reasonably flat. Still, the progress of my return was at least half again as long as the descent, making my absence from Holmes approximately of ninety minutes' duration. As I reached the horizontal cut where I had last seen Sherlock Holmes, my worst fears were quickly realized. The roar from the gorge was so loud I could not hear any sounds of struggle, but as I rounded a sharp curve in the path I came face to face with the young Swiss. He saw me in the same moment as I saw him, and he immediately drew a revolver from his waistband. "Hold!" he commanded sharply.

I had no choice, and I stood in frozen motion upon the narrow ledge. The young man, slender as he was, almost completely obstructed my view of the trail behind him. But directly past the next outcropping of rock I had perceived an occasional blur of motion which could only be of human origin. "Please," I said at length. "At least tell me . . ."

The young man smiled, his handsome, Aryan blondness turning dark before my eyes as the very epitome of evil seemed to drop its shadow across his features. "Your master and mine," he said in broken English. "They fight."

"I must see," I said, starting forward.

At first the young man moved to block me. Then, seeming to take some sordid sense of pleasure in my discomfort, he moved into the narrow chasm just beside him in the rocky cliff. This barely allowed me room to pass. "If you interfere, I will shoot you," he said evenly. "I watch; you watch. Nothing more."

"And if Mr. Holmes defeats your master?" I asked.
"I am ordered to permit whichever man survives to

go away unharmed," said the young man.

There was no reason why I should have believed him, I suppose, yet I did. Nor did I hesitate to pass him on the outside of that narrow ledge, though he could easily have toppled me to my death with a single thrust of hand or foot. He made no attempt to do so, and a moment later I was close enough to the pair of struggling men to realize the full extent of what was happening. My first shock came with the realization that both were naked!

They were engaged, then, in the contest which Moriarty had originally proposed! Or so I first assumed; within a few seconds, however, I realized their present combat involved more than a test of sexual potency. When I had first come upon them, they were twisted together, with the professor's breathtakingly muscular form on top. I could see his truly enormous testicles as they rolled to one side, then the other, in their struggle. Sherlock Holmes had wrapped his long, powerful legs about his

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opponent's waist, and for a moment I wondered if he were indeed impaled.

He was not. Of a sudden, my friend managed to loosen the other's hold and in a trice he was on his feet, crouching and ready for the other to spring. I could see his penis hanging loose and heavy from his groin showing no sign of arousal. From this I assumed their struggle was a test of physical strength quite beyond the limits of Moriarty's original challenge. I was mistaken, only to the extent that the professor was attempting to force the issue, and with the gun in the Swiss youth's hand, Sherlock Holmes had apparently been compelled to participate within the other's stated parameters.

This presumption was soon confirmed. "Your friend insists on fighting," said the man behind me. "But my master has told him the contest could be decided differently."

"What are you saying?" I asked. I had to shout to be heard above the frightful thunder of the torrent. Thus, while communication was barely possible with the Swiss, I could hear nothing of what passed between Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty. The young man behind me did not answer this last question . . . either couldn't hear or merely declined to explain it. I could see that some words were passed between the combatants, as Moriarty went onto his knees and gestured for Holmes to come against him. In all this time, however, I had never seen the front of the professor's body, and thus had no means to judge his expression, nor to ascertain that he was, indeed, attempting to assert his sexual supremacy.

Holmes approached him, his lengthy cock a loose, swinging mass before him. Despite the chill, I could see both men were sweating, so great had been their exertion. Then Holmes was on him, holding the other's head against his groin. If the contest were to be decided solely on sexual might, it was clear his own energies must be flagging. The thought kept hammering at my brain that

this was my fault, for I had thoroughly drained him the night before. But Holmes was not to be defeated in any test of strength. Without warning, he suddenly lurched to the side, toward the open chasm, and, before I could take more than a half step forward, both men hurtled into the void.

I stood in the frozen shock of horror. Holmes disappeared first, and the last I saw of either was the upturned center of Moriarty's body. It twisted in the air so his groin and underbelly flashed briefly in front of me. His rigid mast stood hard and firm, its monstrous proportions revealed in this single, fleeting moment. Then both were gone, and by the time I reached the edge there was nothing to be seen but the boiling turbulence of the falls and the hissing spray which formed its steamy plume above the surging flood.

I must have stood staring at the chasm's depths for a very long while. I had completely forgotten about the Swiss lad, and, in truth, did not know where I was or what I did. I simply stood poised in disbelief as the blood froze in my veins and my brain struggled to grasp the truth of what had happened. Finally, I turned, still in a dazed stupor, and my eyes fell upon the young man who had previously presented such a formidable opposition to my passage. He sat upon the ledge, his back to the rocks behind him. Tears of abject misery streamed down his cheeks, and his body was shaking with the violence of his sobs. The revolver lay discarded by his feet.

The sight of him brought me partially back to my senses, and when he saw me looking at him he turned his swollen, reddened eyes upward to face me. Without a word, he reached into his pocket and extracted a folded packet of paper, which he handed to me. Moving as if my muscles responded to some force outside myself, I dropped down beside him and unfolded the leaves upon my leg. I recognized them at once as being three pages torn from the notebook of Sherlock Holmes:

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MY DEAR WATSON (it said)

I write these few lines through the courtesy of Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final solution of those questions which lie between us. He has given me a sketch of the methods by which he avoided the English police and kept himself informed of our movements. They certainly confirm the very high opinion which I had formed of his abilities. I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dearest, to you.

Yet, if I may make a full confession to you, I was quite convinced that the letter from Meiringen was a hoax, and I allowed you to depart on that errand under the persuasion that some development of this sort would follow. Mr. Moriarty insists that we engage in combat in accordance with his original challenge, and I am compelled at gun-point to comply. However, I swear to you, dearest, that this insidious evil shall not be permitted to survive me. Therefore, this is farewell and good-bye. I wish it could be otherwise, but there is no other way for it.

The young man who has sworn to bear this message to you after the contest is the latest of Mr. Moriarty's conquests. He will be as distraught as you at its conclusion, for if this message must ever be delivered into your hands, his master will also have perished. I beg you to have compassion for him, and to join with him in your mutual grief. In effect, this is my final bequeath, and I pray you will regain your own mental homeostasis through your efforts on this poor creature's behalf.

With my deepest love and affection, SHERLOCK HOLMES

A few words may suffice to tell the little that remains. I turned to the young man beside me, and in our respective states of grief we suddenly found ourselves in each other's arms. It was not a sexual thing, not just then,

though we did eventually return to the Englischer Hof and we slept together in the dependency of grief. After that, Friedl—for that was the young man's name—remained with me and eventually we journeyed back to London together. Jeffrey had left our cottage, and I was never to see him again. His note was brief, and it acknowledged his understanding of my dilemma. He had applied to have his officer's certificate reinstated, he wrote, and assured me he would attempt to achieve a degree of happiness among his fellow shipmates.

I closed my practice and in company with Friedl retired to the rooms on Baker Street which I had formerly shared with my beloved Sherlock Holmes. I live here, still, and I frequently find myself listening to some sound on the stairs that raises the impossible expectation of my friend's return. Yet, it can never be, and someday my mind will accept the fact of his death.

As to the gang, it will be within the memory of the public how completely the evidence which Holmes had accumulated exposed their organization, and how heavily the hand of the dead man weighed upon them. Of their terrible chief few details came out during the proceedings, and if I have now been compelled to make a clear statement of his career, it is due to those injudicious champions who have endeavoured to clear his memory by attacks upon him whom I shall ever regard as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known.

You always suspected Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson were more than just good friends, didn't you? Well, here at last is the long-suppressed COMPLETE, UNEXPURGATED story of the world's greatest detective, only recently brought to light from the secret archives at 221B Baker Street. Doctor Watson, it transpired, kept two sets of books: one for contemporary publication, the other, presented here for the first time, telling it the way it REALLY was! Elementary—my dear Watson!